the PARIS REVIEW

11

NELSON ALGREN

an interview

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Jack Kerouac

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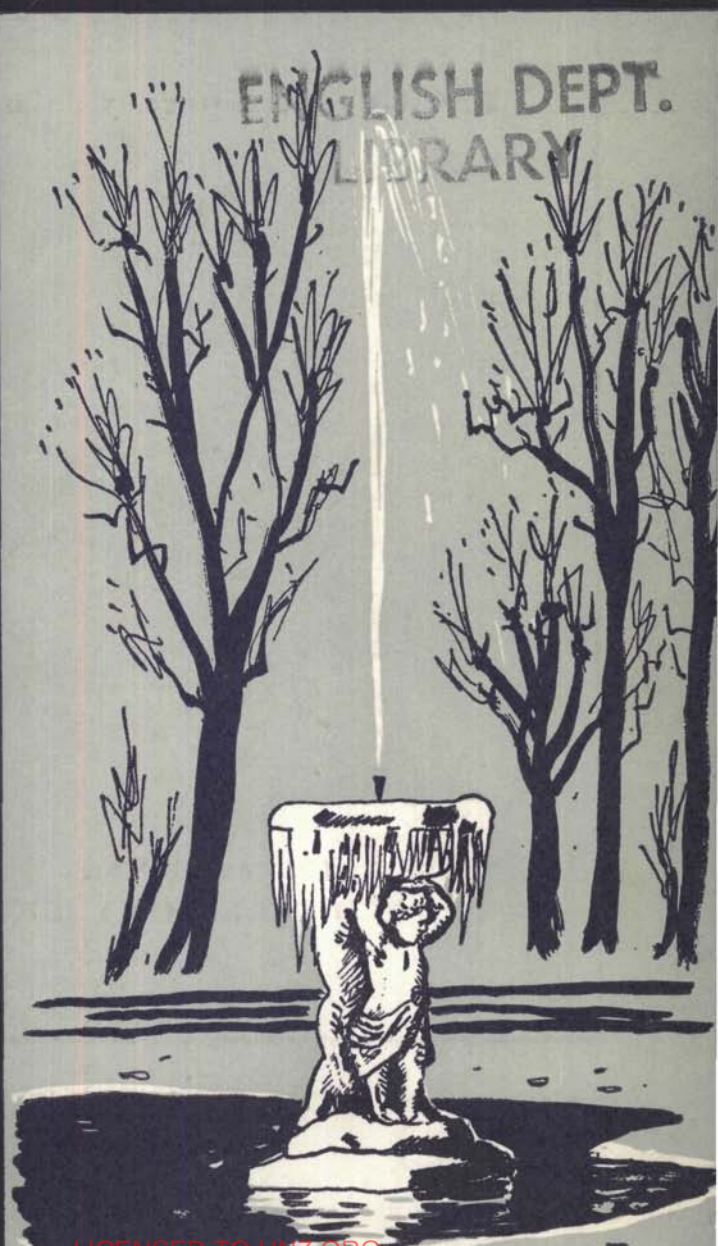

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A HOLIDAY LIST

of Recent Books by Paris Review Editors and Contributors

PARTISANS by Peter Matthiessen. The Viking Press. The second novel by the Fiction Editor of THE PARIS REVIEW whose *Race Rock* was one of the highly praised first novels of 1954.

"...an admirably whole picture of a man trying to reach through the present confusion and distress to a future in which there will be living and breathing room for others beside himself."
—*The New Yorker*

THE RABBIT'S UMBRELLA by George Plimpton. The Viking Press. A fantasy for children of all ages by the Editor of THE PARIS REVIEW, with illustrations by William Pène du Bois, the magazine's first Art Editor.

"...a delightful combination of originality and humour."
—*N.Y. Herald Tribune*

EXILES AND MARRIAGES by Donald Hall. The Viking Press. This collection of verse by the Poetry Editor of THE PARIS REVIEW was the winner of the Lamont Poetry Competition for 1955.

THE PIT AND THE CENTURY PLANT by Pati Hill. Harper & Bros. A journal of two summers spent alone in a farm cottage in central France. A long selection from the book first appeared in the 7th issue of THE PARIS REVIEW.

"Miss Hill has the rare ability to fuse a childlike wonder about woods and ducks and strawberry hunts with a wise and funny acuity about people and complex human situations... a glowing revelation of country life." —*The New Yorker*

THE UNTIDY PILGRIM by Eugene Walter. Eyre & Spottiswode, London. Recently published in England, this satirical comedy by the Associate Editor of THE PARIS REVIEW won the Lippincott Fiction Prize.

"The best-tempered book of the year..." —*Encounter*

GRAND FUGUE ON THE ART OF THE GUMBO by Eugene Walter. Coming in January, poems, meditations, recipes for Creole cooking, written and illustrated by Mr. Walter. To be published by Gaberbocchus, London.

Note: Two stories in *The Best American Short Stories, 1955*, published by Houghton Mifflin Co., first appeared in the 7th issue of THE PARIS REVIEW: *The Hundredth Centennial* by Mac Hyman and *The Fisherman from Chihuahua* by Evan S. Connell.

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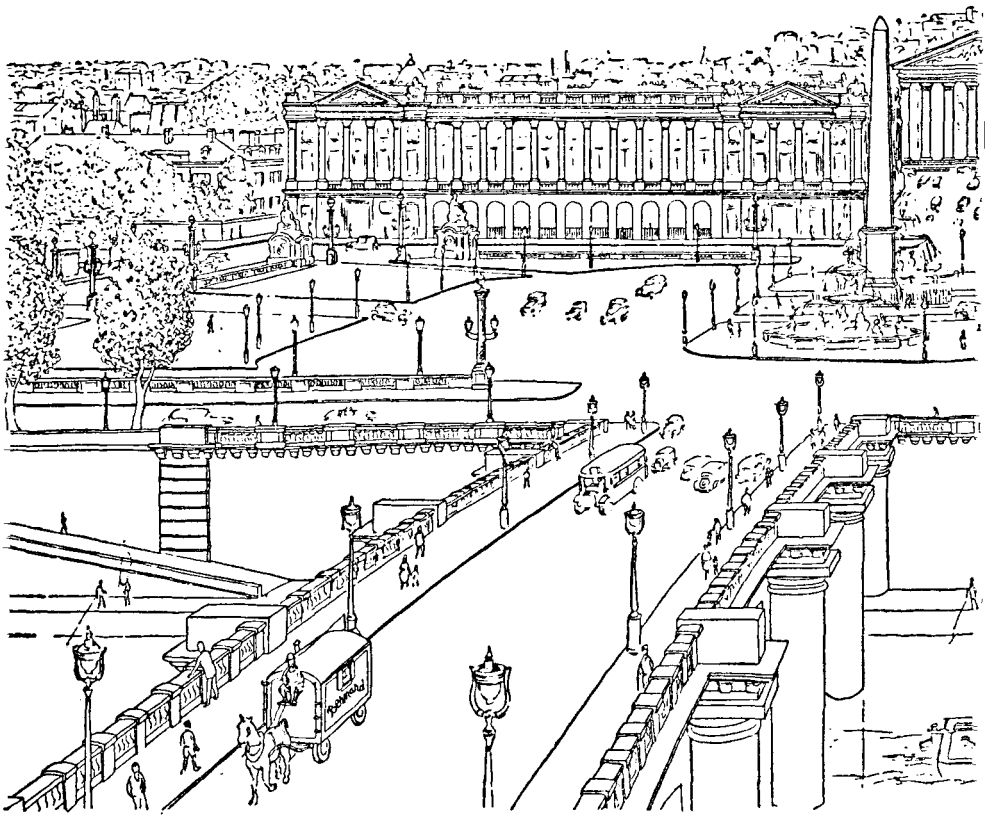

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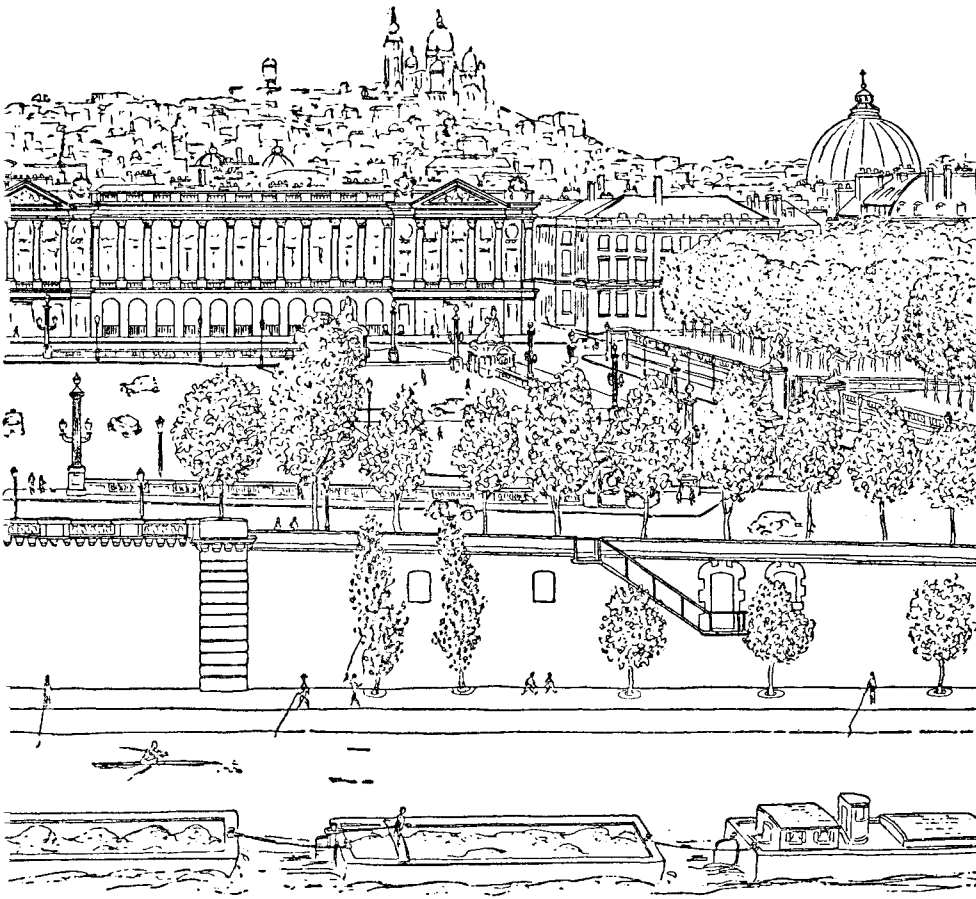

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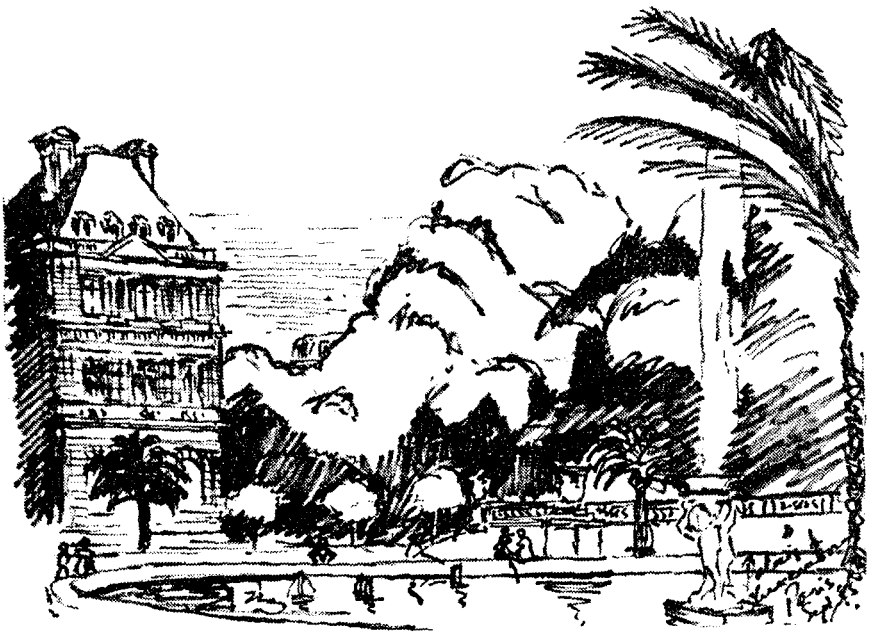

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(Cover by Michel Julac, Frontispiece by William Pène du Bois.)

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THE MEXICAN GIRL

I had bought my ticket and was waiting for the L.A. bus when all of a sudden I saw the cutest little Mexican girl in slacks come cutting across my sight. She was in one of the buses that had just pulled in with a big sigh of airbrakes and was discharging passengers for a rest stop. Her breasts stuck out straight; her little thighs looked delicious; her hair was long and lustrous black; and her eyes were great blue windows with timidities inside. I wished I was on her bus. A pain stabbed my heart, as it did every time I saw a girl I loved who was going the opposite direction in this too-big world. "Los Angeles coach now loading in door two," says the announcer and I get on. I saw her sitting alone. I dropped right opposite her on the other window and began scheming right off. I was so lonely, so sad, so tired, so quivering, so broken, so beat that I got up my courage, the courage necessary to approach a strange girl, and acted. Even then I had to spend five minutes beating my thighs in the dark as the bus rolled down the road. "You gotta, you gotta or you'll die! Damn fool talk to her! What's wrong with you? Aren't you tired enough of yourself by now?" And before I knew what I was doing I leaned across the aisle to her (she was trying to sleep on the seat) "Miss, would you like to use my raincoat for a pillow?" She looked up with a smile and said "No, thank you very much." I sat back trembling; I lit a butt. I waited till she looked at me, with a sad little sidelook of love, and

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I got right up and leaned over her. "May I sit with you, Miss?"

"If you wish."

And this I did. "Where going?"

"L.A." I loved the way she said L.A.; I love the way everybody says L.A. on the Coast, it's their one and only golden town when all is said and done.

"That's where I'm going too!" I cried. "I'm very glad you let me sit with you, I was very lonely and I've been traveling a hell of a long time." And we settled down to telling our stories. Her story was this; she had a husband and child. The husband beat her so she left him, back at Sabinal south of Fresno, and was going to L.A. to live with her sister awhile. She left her little son with her family, who were grape pickers and lived in a shack in the vineyards. She had nothing to do but brood and get mad. I felt like putting my arms around her right away. We talked and talked. She said she loved to talk with me. Pretty soon she was saying she wished she could go to New York too. "Maybe we could!" I laughed. The bus groaned up Grapevine Pass and then we were coming down into the great sprawls of light. Without coming to any particular agreement we began holding hands, and in the same way it was mutely and beautifully and purely decided that when I got my hotel room in L.A. she would be beside me. I ached all over for her; I leaned my face in her beautiful hair. Her little shoulders drove me mad, I hugged her and hugged her. And she loved it.

"I love love," she said closing her eyes. I promised her beautiful love. I gloated over her. Our stories were told, we subsided into silence and sweet anticipatory thoughts. It was as simple as that. You could have all your Peaches and Vi's and Ruth Glenarms and Marylous and Eleanors and Carmens in this world, this was my girl and my kind of girlsoul, and I told her that. She confessed she saw me watching from the bus station bench. "I thought you was a nice college boy."

"Oh I'm a college boy!" I assured her. The bus arrived in Hollywood. In the gray dirty dawn, like the dawn Joel McCrea met Veronica Lake in the diner in the picture

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Sullivan's Travels, she slept in my lap. I looked greedily out the window; stucco houses and palms and Drive-ins, the whole mad thing, the ragged promised land, the fantastic end of America. We got off the bus at Main Street which was no different than where you get off a bus in Kansas City or Chicago or Boston, redbrick, dirty, characters drifting by, trolleys grating in the hopeless dawn, the whorey smell of a big city.

And here my mind went haywire, I don't know why. I began getting foolish paranoiac visions that Teresa, or Terry, her name, was a common little hustler who worked the buses for a guy's bucks by making regular appointments like ours in L.A. where she brought the sucker first to a breakfast place, where her boy waited, and then to a certain hotel to which he had access with his gun or his whatever. I never confessed this to her. We ate breakfast and a pimp kept watching us; I fancied Terry was making secret eyes at him. I was tired and felt strange and lost in a faraway, disgusting place. The goof of terror took over my thoughts and made me act petty and cheap. "Do you know that guy?" I said.

"What guy you mean, ho-ney?" I let it drop. She was slow and hungup in everything she did; it took her a long time to eat, she chewed slowly and stared into space, and smoked a cigarette slowly, and kept talking, and I was like a haggard ghost suspicioning every move she made, thinking she was stalling for time. This was all a fit of sickness. I was sweating as we went down the street hand in hand. Fellows kept turning and looking at us. The first hotel we hit had a vacant room and before I knew it I was locking the door behind me and she was sitting on the bed taking off her shoes. I kissed her meekly. Better she'd never know. To relax our nerves I knew we needed whiskey, especially me. I ran out and fiddled all over for twelve blocks hurrying till I found a pint of whiskey for sale at a newsstand. I ran back all energy. Terry was in the bathroom fixing her face. I poured one big drink in a waterglass and we had slugs. Oh it was sweet and delicious and worth my whole life and lugubrious voyage. I stood behind her at the mirror and we danced in the bathroom that

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way. I began talking about my friends back east. I said "You oughta meet a great girl I know called Dorie. She's a sixfoot redhead. If you came to New York she'd show you where to get work."

"Who is this sixfoot redhead?" she demanded suspiciously. "Why do you tell me about her?" In her simple soul she couldn't fathom my kind of glad nervous talk. I let it drop. She began to get drunk in the bathroom.

"Come on to bed!" I kept saying.

"Sixfoot redhead, hey? And I thought you was a nice college boy, I saw you in your nice sweater and I said to myself 'Hmm ain't he nice'—No! And no! And no! You have to be a goddam pimp like all of them!"

"What in the hell are you talking about?"

"Don't stand there and tell me that sixfoot redhead ain't a madam, 'cause I know a madam when I hear about one, and you, you're just a pimp like all the rest of 'em I meet, everybody's a pimp."

"Listen Terry, I am not a pimp. I swear to you on the Bible I am not a pimp. Why should I be a pimp. My only interest is you."

"All the time I thought I met a nice boy. I was so glad, I hugged myself and said 'Hmm a real nice boy instead of a damn pimp!"

"Terry," I pleaded with all my soul, "please listen to me and understand. I'm not a pimp, I'm just Sal Paradise, look at my wallet." And an hour ago I thought *she* was a hustler. How sad it was. Our minds with their store of madness had diverged. O gruesome life how I moaned and pleaded and then I got mad and realized I was pleading with a dumb little Mexican wench and I told her so; and before I knew it I picked up her red pumps and threw them at the bathroom door and told her to get out. "Go on, beat it!" I'd sleep and forget it; I had my own life; my own sad and ragged life forever. There was a dead silence in the bathroom. I took my clothes off and went to bed. Terry came out with tears of sorriness in her eyes. In her simple and funny little mind had been decided the fact that a pimp does not throw a woman's

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shoes against the door and does not tell her to get out. In reverent and sweet silence she took her things off and slipped her tiny body into the sheets with me. It was brown as grapes. Her hips were so narrow she couldn't bear a child without getting gashed open; a Caesarian scar crossed her poor belly. Her legs were like little sticks. She was only four foot ten. I made love to her in the sweetness of the weary morning. Then, two tired angels of some kind, hung up forlornly in an L.A. shelf, having found the closest and most delicious thing in life together, we fell asleep and slept till late afternoon.

For the next fifteen days we were together for better or worse. We decided to hitch-hike to New York together; she was going to be my girl in town. I envisioned wild complexities, a season, a new season. First we had to work and earn enough money for the trip. Terry was all for starting at once with my twenty dollars. I didn't like it. And like a damnfool I considered the problem for two days reading the want ads of wild new L.A. papers I'd never seen before in my life, in cafeterias and bars, until my twenty'd dwindled to twelve. The situation was growing. We were happy as kids in our little hotel room. In the middle of the night I got up because I couldn't sleep, pulled the cover over baby's bare brown shoulder, and examined the L.A. night. What brutal, hot, siren-whining nights they are! Right across the street there was trouble. An old rickety rundown roominghouse was the scene of some kind of tragedy. The cruiser was pulled up below and the cops were questioning an old man with gray hair. Sobbings came from within. I could hear everything, together with the hum of my hotel neon. I never felt sadder in my life. L.A. is the loneliest and most brutal of American cities; New York gets godawful cold in the winter but there's a feeling of whacky comradeship somewhere in some streets. L.A. is a jungle.

South Main street, where Terry and I took strolls with hotdogs, was a fantastic carnival of lights and wildness. Booted cops frisked people on practically every corner. The beatest characters in the country swarmed on the sidewalks—all of it under those soft Southern California stars that are lost

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in the brown halo of the huge desert encampment L.A. really is. You could smell tea, weed, I mean marijuana floating in the air, together with the chili beans and beer. That grand wild sound of bop floated from beerparlor jukes, Dizzy and Bird and Bags and early Miles; it mixed medleys with every-kind of cowboy and boogiewoogie in the American night. Everybody looked like Hunkey. Wild negroes with bop caps and goatees came laughing by; then longhaired brokendown hipsters straight off route 66 from New York, then old desert rats carrying packs and heading for a park bench at the Plaza, then Methodist ministers with ravelled sleeves, and an occasional Nature Boy saint in beard and sandals. I wanted to meet them all, talk to everybody, but Terry hurried along, we were busy trying to get a buck together, like everybody else.

We went to Hollywood to try to work in the drugstore at Sunset and Vine. The questions that were asked of us in upstairs offices to determine our fitness for the slime of the sodafountain greaseracks were so sinister that I had to laugh. It turned my gut. Sunset and Vine!—what a corner! Now there's a corner! Great families off jalopies from the hinterlands stood around the sidewalk gaping for sight of some movie star and the movie star never showed up. When a limousine passed they rushed eagerly to the curb and ducked to look: some character in dark glasses sat inside with a bejewelled blonde. "Don Ameche! Don Ameche!" "No George Murphy! George Murphy!" They milled around looking at one another. Luscious little girls by the thousands rushed around with Drive-in trays; they'd come to Hollywood to be movie stars and instead got all involved in everybody's garbage including Darryl Zanuck's. Handsome queer boys who had come to Hollywood to be cowboys walked around wetting their eyebrows with hincty fingertip. Those beautiful little gone gals cut by in slacks in a continuous unbelievable stream; you thought you were in heaven but it was only Purgatory and everybody was about to be pardoned, paroled, powdered and put down; the girls came to be starlets; they up-ended in Drive-ins with pouts and goosepimples

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on their bare legs. Terry and I tried to find work at the Drive-ins. It was no soap anywhere, thank God. Hollywood Boulevard was a great screaming frenzy of cars; there were minor accidents at least once a minute; everybody was rushing off towards the furthest palm... and beyond that was the desert and nothingness. So they thought. You don't expect everybody to know that you can find water in a kopash cactus, or sweet taffy in your old mesquite. Hollywood Sams stood in front of swank restaurants arguing exactly, loudly and showoff the same way Broadway Sams argue on Jacobs Beach sidewalks New York, only here they wore lightweight suits and their talk was even more dreary and unutterably cornier. Tall cadaverous preachers shuddered by. Seventy-year-old World Rosicrucian ladies with tiaras in their hair stood under palms signifying nothing. Fat screaming women ran across the Boulevard to get in line for the quiz shows. I saw Jerry Colona buying a car at Buick Motors; he was inside the vast plateglass window fingering his mustachio, incredible, real, like seeing the Three Stooges seriously ashen-faced in a real room. Terry and I ate in a cafeteria downtown which was decorated to look like a grotto, with metal tits spurting everywhere and great impersonal stone buttoxes belonging to deities of fish and soapy Neptune. People ate lugubrious meals around the waterfalls, their faces green with marine sorrow. All the cops in L.A. looked like handsome gigolos; obviously, they'd come to L.A. to make the movies. Everybody had come to make the movies, even me. Terry and I were finally reduced to trying to get jobs on South Main Street among the beat countermen and dishgirls who made no bones about their beatness and even there it was no go. We still had twelve dollars.

"Man, I'm going to get my clothes from Sis and we'll hitchhike to New York," said Terry. "Come on man. Let's do it. If you can't boogie I know I'll show you how." That last part was a song of hers she kept singing, after a famous record. We hurried to her sister's house in the sliverous Mexican shacks somewhere beyond Alameda Avenue. I waited in a dark alley behind Mexican kitchens because her sister wasn't

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supposed to see me and like it. Dogs ran by. There were little lamps illuminating the little rat alleys. I stood there swigging from the bottle of wine and eying the stars and digging the sounds of the neighborhood. I could hear Terry and her sister arguing in the soft warm night. I was ready for anything. Terry came out and led me by the hand to Central Avenue, which is the colored main drag of L.A. And what a wild place it is, with chickenshacks barely big enough to house a jukebox and the jukebox blowing nothing but blues, bop and jump. We went up dirty tenement stairs and came to the room of Terry's friend, Margarina, a colored girl apparently named by her loving mother after the spelling on an oleo wrapper. Margarina, a lovely mulatto, owed Terry a skirt and a pair of shoes; her husband was black as spades and kindly. He went right out and bought a pint of whiskey to host me proper. I tried to pay part of it but he said no. They had two little children. The kids bounced on the bed, it was their play-place. They put their arms around me and looked at me with wonder. The wild humming night of Central Avenue, the night of Hamp's *Central Avenue Breakdown*, howled and boomed along outside. They were singing in the halls, singing from their windows, just hell be damned and lookout. Terry got her clothes and we said goodbye. We went down to a chickenshack and played records on the jukebox. Yakking with our beer we decided what to do: we decided to hitch to New York with our remaining monies. She had five dollars coming from her sister, we rushed back to the shacks. So before the daily room rent was due again we packed up and took off on a red car to Arcadia, California, where Santa Anita racetrack is located under snowcapped mountains as I well knew from boyhood pastings of horse-race pictures in sad old notebooks showing Azucar winning in 1935 the great $100,000 'Cap and you see dim snows heaped over the backstretch mountains. Route 66. It was night. We were pointed towards that enormity which is the American continent. Holding hands we walked several miles down the dark road to get out of the populated district. It was a Saturday night. We stood under a roadlamp thumbing when

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suddenly cars full of young kids roared by with streamers flying. "Yaah! yaah! we won! we won!" they all shouted. Then they yoo-hooed us and got great glee out of seeing a guy and a girl on the road. Dozens of them passed in successive jalopies, young faces and 'throaty young voices' as the saying goes. I hated every one of them. Who did they think were yaahing at somebody on the road because they were little high school punks and their parents carved the roast beef on Sunday afternoons. Nor did we get a ride. We had to walk back to town and worse of all we needed coffee and had the misfortune of going into the same gaudy wood-laced place with old soda johns with beerfountain mustaches out front. The same kids were there but we were still minding our own business. Terry and I sipped our coffee and cocoa. We had battered bags and all the world before us... all that ground out there, that desert dirt and rat tat tat. We looked like a couple of sullen Indians in a Navajo Springs sodafountain, black bent heads at a table. The schoolkids saw now that Terry was a Mexican, a Pachuco wildcat; and that her boy was worse than that. With her pretty nose in the air she cut out of there and we wandered together in the dark up along the ditches of highways. I carried the bags and wanted to carry more. We made tracks and cut along and were breathing fogs in the cold night air. I didn't want to go on another minute without a warm night's rest in a warm sack together. Morning be damned, let's hide from the world another night. I wanted to fold her up in my system of limbs under no light but stars in the window. We went to a motel court and asked if they had a cabin. Yes. We bought a comfortable little suite for four dollars. I was spending my money anyhow. Shower, bath towels, wall radio and all, just for one more night. We held each other tight. We had long serious talks and took baths and discussed things on the pillow with light on and then with light out. Something was being proved, I was convincing her of something, which she accepted, and we concluded the pact in the dark, breathless. Then pleased, like little lambs.

In the morning we boldly struck out on our new plan.

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Terry wore her dark glasses with authority. Her pretty little, severe face beneath, with the noble nose, almost hawk-like Indian nose but with upswerved cute hollow cheekbones to make an oval and a prettywoman blush, with red ruby full lips and Aunt Jemima Skirt teeth, mud nowhere on her but was imprinted in the pigment of the Mongol skin. We were going to take a bus to Bakersfield with the last eight dollars and work picking grapes. "See instead of going to New York now we're all set to work awhile and get what we need, then we 'll go, in a bus, we won't have to hitch-hike, you see how no good it is..."

We arrived in Bakersfield in late afternoon, with our plan to hit every fruit wholesaler in town. Terry said we could live in tents on the job. The thought of me lying there in a tent, and picking grapes in the cool California mornings after nights of guitar music and wine with dipped grapes, hit me right. "Don't worry about a thing."

But there were no jobs to be had and much confusion with everybody giving confused Indian information and innumerable tips ("Go out to County Road you'll find Sacano") and no job materialized. So we went to a Chinese restaurant and had a dollar's worth of chow mein among the sad Saturday afternoon families, digging them, and set out with reinforced bodies. We went across the Southern Pacific tracks to Mexican town. Terry jabbered with her brethren asking for jobs. It was night now, we had a few dollars left, and the little Mextown street was one blazing bulb of lights: movie marquees, fruit stands, penny arcades, Five and Tens and hundreds of rickety trucks and mudspattered jalopies parked all over. Whole Mexican fruitpicking families wandered around eating popcorn. Terry talked to everybody. I was beginning to despair. What I needed, what Terry needed too was a drink so we bought a quart of California port wine for 35 cents and went to the railyards to drink. We found a place where hoboes had drawn up crates to sit over fires. We sat there and drank the wine. On our left were the freight cars, sad and sooty red beneath the moon; straight ahead the lights and airport pokers of Bakersfield proper; to our right a tremendous

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aluminum Quonset warehouse. I remembered it later in passing. Ah it was a fine night, a warm night, a wine-drinking night, a moony night, and a night to hug your girl and talk and spit and be heavengoing. This we did. She was a drinking little fool and kept up with me and passed me and went right on talking till midnight. We never moved from those crates. Occasionally bums passed, Mexican mothers passed with children, and the prowl car came by and the cop got out to leak but most of the time we were alone and mixing up our souls more and ever more till it would be terribly hard to say goodbye. At midnight we got up and goofed towards the highway.

Terry had a new idea. We would hitch to Sabinal, her hometown up the San Joaquin valley, and live in her brother's garage. Anything was all right to me, especially a nice garage. On the road I made Terry sit down on my bag to make her look like a woman in distress and right off a truck stopped and we ran for it all glee-giggles. The man was a good man, his truck was poor. He roared and crawled on up the Valley. We got to Sabinal in the wee hours of the morning not until after that tired sleepy beau' pushed his old rattle rig from Indian Ponce de Leon Springs of down-valley up the screaming cricket fields of grape and lemon four hours, to let us off, with a cheerful "So long pard," and here we were with the wine finished (I, while she slept in the truck). Now I'm stoned. The sky is grey in the east. "Wake, for morning in the bowl of night..." There was a quiet leafy square, we walked around it, past sleeping sodafountains and barber shops, looking for some garage. There was no garage. Ghostly white houses. A whistle stop on the S.P. A California town of old goldbottle times. She couldn't find her brother's garage but now we were going to find her brother's buddy who would know. Nobody home. It all went on in rickety alleys of little Mextown Sabinal, wrong side of the tracks. As dawn began to break I lay flat on my back in the lawn of the town square, and I'd done that once before when they thought I was drowned in an eastern resort, and I kept saying over and over, "You won't tell what he done up in Weed will you? What'd

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he do up in Weed? You won't tell will you? What'd he do up in Weed?" This was from the picture *Of Mice and Men* with Burgess Meredith talking to the big foreman of the ranch; I thought we were near Weed. Terry giggled. Anything I did was all right with her. I could lay there and go on saying "What'd he do up in Weed?" till the ladies come out for church and she wouldn't care.

Because her brother was in these parts I figured we'd be all set soon and I took her to an old hotel by the tracks and we went to bed comfortably. Five dollars left. It was all smelling of fresh paint in there, and old mahogany mirrors and creaky. In the bright sunny morning Terry got up early and went to find her brother. I slept till noon; when I looked out the window I suddenly saw an S.P. freight going by with hundreds of hoboes reclining on the flatcars and in gons and rolling merrily along with packs for pillows and funny papers before their noses and some munching on good California grapes picked up by the watertank. "Damn!" I yelled. "Hooee! It *is* the promised land." They were all coming from Frisco; in a week they'd all be going back in the same grand style.

Terry arrived with her brother, his buddy, and her child. Her brother was a wildbuck Mexican hotcat with a hunger for booze, a great good kid. His buddy was a big flabby Mexican who spoke English without much accent and was anxious to please and overconcerned to prove something. I could see he had always had eyes for Terry. Her little boy was Raymond, seven years old, darkeyed and sweet. Well there we were, and another wild day began.

Her brother's name was Freddy. He had a '38 Chevvy. We piled into that and took off to parts unknown. "Where we going?" I asked. The buddy did the explaining, Ponzo, that's what everybody called him. He stank. I found out why. His business was selling manure to farmers, he had a truck. We were going to check on that. Freddy always had three or four dollars in his pocket and was happygolucky about things. He always said "That's right man, there you go—dah you go, dah you go!" And he went. He drove 70 miles an hour in the old heap and we went to Madera beyond Fresno, throwing

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dust back our tires, and saw farmers about manure. Their voices drawled to us from the hot sun open. Freddy had a bottle. "Today we drink, tomorrow we work. Dah you go man—take a shot." Terry sat in back with her baby; I looked back at her and saw a flush of homecoming joy on her face. She'd been driving around like this for years. The beautiful green countryside of October in California reeled by madly. I was guts and juice again and ready to go.

"Where do we go now man?"

"We go find a farmer with some manure layin around—tomorrow we drive back in the truck and pick up. Man we'll make a lot of money. Don't worry about nothing."

"We're all in this together!" yelled Ponzo who wouldn't have got the manure by himself. I saw this was so—everywhere I went everybody was in it together. We raced through the crazy streets of Fresno and on up the Valley to some farmers in certain backroads. Ponzo got out of the car and conducted confused conversations with old Mexicans; nothing of course came of it.

"What we need is a drink!" yelled Freddy and off we went to a crossroads saloon. Americans are always drinking in crossroads saloons on Sunday afternoon; they bring their kids; there are piles of manure outside the screendoor; they gabble and brawl over brews and grow haggly baggly and you hear harsh laughter rising from routs and song, nobody's really having any fun but faces get redder and time flies fading faster. But everything's fine. Come nightfall the kids come crying and the parents are drunk. Around the jukebox they go weaving back to the house. Everywhere in America I've been in crossroads saloons drinking with whole families. The kids eat popcorn and chips and play in back or sneak stale beers for all I know. Freddy and I and Ponzo and Terry sat there drinking and shouting. Vociferous types. The sun got red. Nothing had been accomplished. What was there to accomplish? "Manana," said Freddy, "manana man we make it; have another beer, man, dah you go, DAH YOU GO!" We staggered out and got in the car; off we went to a highway bar. This one had blue neons and pink lights. Ponzo was a big loud vociferous

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type who knew everybody in San Joaquin valley apparently from the way every time we clomped into a joint he'd let out loud Ho-Yo's. Now I had a few bucks left and ruefully counted them. Festooned all over my brain were the ideas of going back home to New York at once with this handful of, change, hitching as I'd been doing at Bakersfield that night, leave Terry with her wild brothers and mad Mexican manure piles and mananas of crazy beer. But I was having a hell of a time. From the highway bar I went with Ponzo alone in the car to find some certain farmer; instead we wound up in Madera Mextown digging the girls and trying to pick up a few for him and Freddy; and then, as purple dusk descended over the grape country, I found myself sitting dumbly in the car as he argued with some old farmer at the kitchen door about the price of a watermelon the old man grew in the backyard. We had a watermelon, ate it on the spot and threw the rinds on the old Mexican's dirt sidewalk. All kinds of pretty little girls were cutting down the darkening street. I said "Where the hell are we?"

"Don't worry man" said big Ponzo "tomorrow we make a lot of money, tonight we don't worry." We went back and picked up Terry and the others and wailed to Fresno in the highway lights of night. We were all raving hungry. We bounced over the railroad tracks and hit the wild streets of Fresno Mextown. Strange Chinamen hung out of windows digging the Sunday night streets; groups of Mex chicks swaggered around in slacks; mambo blasted from jukeboxes; the lights were festooned around like Halloween. We went into a restaurant and had tacos and mashed pinto beans rolled in tortillas; it was delicious. I whipped out my last shining four dollars and change which stood between me and the Atlantic shore and paid for the lot. Now I had three bucks. Terry and I looked at each other. "Where we going to sleep tonight baby?"

"I don't know." Freddy was drunk; now all he was saying was: "Dah you go man—dah you go man" in a tender and tired voice. It had been a long day. None of us knew what was going on, or what the Good Lord appointed. Poor little Raymond fell asleep against my arm. We drove back to

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Sabinal. On the way we pulled up sharp at a roadhouse on the highway, 99, because Freddy wanted one last beer. In back were trailers and tents and a few rickety motel-style rooms. I inquired about the price and it was two bucks for a cabin. I asked Terry how about that and she said great, because we had the kid on our hands now and had to make him comfortable. So after a few beers in the saloon, where sullen Okies reeled to the music of a cowboy band and sprawled drawling at sticky tables where they'd been swigling brew since one o'clock in the afternoon and here it was twelve hours later and all the stars out and long sleepy, Terry and I and Raymond went into a cabin and got ready to hit the sack. Ponzo kept hanging around, talking to us in the starry door; he had no place to sleep. Freddy slept at his father's house in the vineyard shack. "Where do you live, Ponzo?" I asked.

"Nowhere, man. I'm supposed to live with Big Rosey but she threw me out last night. I'm goin to get my truck and sleep in it tonight." Guitars tinkled. Terry and I gazed at the stars together from the tiny bathroom window and took a shower and dried each other.

"Manana," she said, "everything'll be all right tomorrow, don't you think so sal-honey man?"

"Sure baby, manana." It was always manana. For the next week that was all I heard, Manana, a lovely word and one that probably means heaven. Little Raymond jumped in bed, clothes and all and went to sleep; sand spilled out of his shoes, Madera sand. Terry and I had to get up in the middle of the night and brush it off the sheets. In the morning I got up, washed and took a walk around the place. Sweet dew was making me breathe that human fog. We were five miles out of Sabinal in the cotton fields and grape vineyards along highway 99. I asked the big fat woman who owned the camp if any field tents were vacant. The cheapest one, a dollar a day, was vacant. I fished up that last dollar and moved into it. There was a bed, a stove and a cracked mirror hanging from a pole; it was delightful. I had to stoop to get in, and when I did there was my baby and my baby-boy. We waited for Freddy and

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Ponzo to arrive with the truck. They arrived with beer and started to get drunk in the tent. "Great tent!"

"How about the manure?"

"Too late today—tomorrow man we make a lot of money, today we have a few beers. What do you say, beer?" I didn't have to be prodded. "Dah you go—DAH YOU GO!" yelled Freddy. I began to see that our plans for making money with the manure truck would never materialize. The truck was parked outside the tent. It smelled like Ponzo. That night Terry and I went to sleep in the sweet night air beneath our dewy and made sweet old love. I was just getting ready go to sleep when she said "You want to love me now?"

I said "What about Raymond."

"He don't mind. He's asleep." But Raymond wasn't asleep and he said nothing.

The boys came back the next day with the manure truck and drove off to find whiskey; they came back and had a big time in the tent. Talking about the great old times when they were kids here and when they were kids in Calexico and their eccentric old uncles from Old Mexico and the fabulous characters out of the past I missed. "You tink I'm crazy!" yelled Freddy wildeyed, his hair over his eyes. That night Ponzo said it was too cold and slept on the ground in our tent wrapped in a big tarpaulin smelling of cowflaps. Terry hated him; she said he hung around her brother just to be close to her. He was probably in love with her. I didn't blame him.

Nothing was going to happen except starvation for Terry and me, I had a dime left, so in the morning I walked around the countryside asking for cottonpicking work. Everybody told me to go to a farm across the highway from the camp. I went; the farmer was in the kitchen with his women. He came out, listened to my story, and warned me he was only paying so much per hundred pound of picked cotton, three dollars. I pictured myself picking at least three hundred pounds a day and took the job. He fished out some old long canvas bags from the barn and told me the picking started at dawn. I rushed back to Terry all glee. On the way a grapetruck went over a bump in the road and threw off great bunches of grape

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on the hot tar. I picked it up and took it home. Terry was glad. "Raymond and me'll come with you and help."

"Pshaw!" I said "No such thing!"

"You see, you see, it's very hard picking cotton. If you can't boogie I know I show you how." We ate the grapes and in the evening Freddy showed up with a loaf of bread and a pound of hamburg and we had a picnic. In a larger tent next to ours lived a whole family of Okie cottonpickers; the grandfather sat in a chair all day long, he was too old to work; the son and daughter, and their children, filed every dawn across the highway to my farmer's field and went to work. At dawn the next day I went with them. They said the cotton was heavier at dawn because of the dew and you could make more money than in the afternoon. Nevertheless they worked all day from dawn to sundown. The grandfather had come from Nebraska during the great plague of the Thirties, that old selfsame dustcloud, with the entire family in a jalopy truck. They had been in California ever since. They loved to work. In the ten years the old man's son had increased his children to the number of four, some of whom were old enough now to pick cotton. And in that time they had progressed from ragged poverty in Simon Legree fields to a kind of smiling respectability in better tents, and that was all. They were extremely proud of their tent. "Ever going back to Nebraska?"

"Pshaw, there's nothing back there. What we want to do is buy a trailer." We bent down and began picking cotton. It was beautiful. Across the field were the tents, and beyond them the sere brown cottonfields that stretched out of sight, and over that the brown arroyo foothills and then as in a dream the snowcapped Sierras in the blue morning air. This was so much better than washing dishes on South Main Street. But I knew nothing about cottonpicking. I spent too much time disengaging the white ball from its crackly bed; the others did it in one flick. Moreover my fingertips began to bleed; I needed gloves, or more experience. There was an old Negro couple in the field with us. They picked cotton with the same Godblessed patience their grandfathers had practised in prewar

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Alabama: they moved right along their rows, bent and blue, and their bags increased. My back began to ache. But it was beautiful kneeling and hiding in that earth; if I felt like resting I just lay down with my face on the pillow of brown moist earth. Birds sang an accompaniment. I thought I had found my life's work. Terry and Raymond came waving at me across the field in the hot lullal noon and pitched in with me. Damn if he wasn't faster than I was!!—a child. And of course Terry was twice as fast. They worked ahead of me and left me piles of clean cotton to add to my bag, my long lugubrious nightmare bag that dragged after me like some serpent or some bedraggled buttoned dragon in a Kafkean dream and worse. My mouth drops just to think of that deep bag. Terry left workmanlike piles, Raymond little childly piles. I stuck them in with sorrow. What kind of an old man was I that I couldn't support my own can let alone theirs. They spent all afternoon with me; the earth is an Indian thing. When the sun got red we trudged back together. At the end of the field I unloaded my burden on a scale, to my surprise it weighed a pound and half only, and I got a buck fifty. Then I borrowed one of the Okie boys' bicycles and rode down 99 to a crossroads grocery where I bought cans of spaghetti and meatballs, bread, butter, coffee and five cent cakes, and came back with the bag on the handlebars. L.A.-bound traffic zoomed by; Fresno-bound harrassed my tail. I swore and swore. I looked up at the dark sky and prayed to God for a better break in life and a better chance to do something for the little people I loved. Nobody was paying any attention to me up there. I should have known better. It was Terry who brought my soul back; on the tent stove she warmed up the food and it was one of the greatest meals of my life I was so hungry and tired. Sighing like an old Negro cottonpicker, I reclined on the bed and smoked a cigarette. Dogs barked in the cool night. Freddy and Ponzo had given up calling in the evenings. I was satisfied with that. Terry curled up beside me, Raymond sat on my chest, and they drew pictures of animals in my notebook. The light of our tent burned on the frightful plain. The cowboy music twanged in the roadhouse and

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carried across the fields all sadness. It was all right with me. I kissed my baby and we put out the lights.

In the morning the dew made the tent sag; I got up with my towel and toothbrush and went to the general motel toilet to wash; then I came back, put on my pants which were all torn from kneeling in the earth and had been sewed by Terry in the evening; put on my ragged strawhat which had originally been Raymond's toy hat; and went across the highway with my canvas cottonbag. The cotton was wet and heavy. The sun was red on moist earth.

Every day I earned approximately a dollar and a half. It was just enough to buy groceries in the evening on the bicycle. The days rolled by. I forgot all about the East and the ravings of the bloody road. Raymond and I played all the time: he liked me to throw him up in the air and down on the bed. Terry sat mending clothes. I was a man of the earth precisely as I had dreamed I would be in New York. There was talk that Terry's husband was back in Sabinal and out for me; I was ready for him. One night the Okies went beserk in the roadhouse and tied a man to a tree and beat him with two-by-fours. I was asleep at the time and only heard about it. From then on I carried a big stick with me in the tent in case they got the idea we Mexicans were fouling up their trailer camp. They thought I was a Mexican, of course; and I am.

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But now it was getting on in October and getting much colder in the nights. The Okie family had a woodstove and planned to stay for the winter. We had no stove, and besides the rent for the tent was due. Terry and I bitterly decided we'd have to leave and try something else. "Go back to your family," I gnashed. "For God's sake you can't be batting around tents with a baby like Raymond; the poor little tyke is cold." Terry cried because I was criticizing her motherly instincts; I meant no such thing. When Ponzo came in the truck one gray afternoon we decided to see her family about the situation. But I mustn't be seen and would have to hide in the vineyard. "Tell your mother you'll get a job and help with the groceries. Anything's better than this."

"But you're going, I can hear you talk."

"Well I got to go *some* time—"

"What do you mean, some time. You said we'd stick together and go to New York together. Freddy wants to go to New York too! Now! We'll all go."

"I dunno, Terry, goddamit I dunno—"

We got in the truck and Ponzo started for Sabinal; the truck broke down in some backroad and simultaneously it started to rain wildly. We sat in the old truck cursing. Ponzo got out and toiled in the rain in his torn white shirt. He was a good old guy after all. We promised each other one big more bat. Off we went to a rickety bar in Sabinal Mextown and spent an hour sopping up the cerveza as the rain drove past the door and the jukebox boomed those brokenhearted campo lovesongs from old Mexico, sad, incredibly sad like clouds going over the horizon like dogs on their hind legs, the singer breaking out his wild Ya Ya Henna like the sound of a coyote crying, broken, half laughter, half tears. I was through with my chores in the cottonfield, I could feel it as the beer ran through me like wildfire. We screamed happily our insane conversations. We'd do it, we'd do everything! I could feel the pull of my own whole life calling me back. I needed fifty dollars to get back to New York. While Terry and Ponzo drank I ran in the rain to the postoffice and scrawled a penny postcard request for $50 and sent it to my aunt;

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she'd do it. I was as good as saved; lazy butt was saved again. It was a secret from Terry.

The rain stopped and we drove to Terry's family shack. It was situated on an old road that ran between the vineyards. It was dark when we got there finally. They let me off a quarter-mile up the road and drove to the door. Light poured out of the door; Terry's six other brothers were playing their guitars and singing all together like a professional recording and beautiful. "...si tu corazon..." The old man was drinking wine. I heard shouts and arguments above the singing. They called her a whore because she'd left her no good husband and gone to L.A. and left Raymond with them. At intervals the brothers stopped singing to regroup their choruses. The old man was yelling. But the sad fat brown mother prevailed, as she always does among the great Fellaheen peoples of the world, and Terry was allowed to come back home. The brothers began to sing gay songs, fast. I huddled in the cold rainy wind and watched everything across the sad vineyards of October in the Valley. My mind was filled with that great song "Lover Man" as Billy Holliday sings it; I had my own concert in the bushes. "Someday we'll meet, and you'll dry all my tears, and whisper sweet, little words in my ear, hugging and akissing, Oh what we've been missing, Lover Man Oh where can you be..." It's not the words so much as the great harmonic tune and the way Billy sings it, like a woman stroking her man's hair in soft lamplight. The winds howled. I got cold. Terry and Ponzo came back and we rattled off in the old truck to meet Freddy, who was now living with Ponzo's woman Big Rosey; we tooted the horn for him in woodfence alleys. Big Rosey threw him out, we heard yelling and saw Freddy running out with his head ducking. Everything was collapsing. Everybody was laughing. That night Terry held me tight, of course, and told me not to leave. She said she'd work picking grapes and make enough money for both of us; meanwhile I could live in Farmer Heffelfinger's barn down the road from her family. I'd have nothing to do but sit in the grass all day and eat grapes. "You like that?"

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I rubbed my jaw. In the morning her cousins came to the tent to get us in the truck. These were also singers. I suddenly realized thousands of Mexicans all over the countryside knew about Terry and I and that it must have been a juicy romantic topic for them. The cousins were very polite and in fact charming. I stood on the truck platform with them as we rattlebanged into town, hanging onto the rail and smiling pleasantries, talking about where we were in the war and what the pitch was. There were five cousins in all and every one of them was nice. They seemed to belong to the side of Terry's family that didn't act up like her brother Freddy. But I loved that wild Freddy. He swore he was coming to New York and join me. I pictured him in New York putting off everything till manana. He was drunk in a field someplace today.

I got off the truck at the crossroads and the cousins drove Terry and Raymond home. They gave me the high-sign from the front of the house: the father and mother weren't home. So I had the run of the house for the afternoon, digging it and Terry's three giggling fat sisters and the crazy children sitting in the middle of the road with tortillas in their hands. It was a four-room shack; I couldn't imagine how the whole family managed to live in there, find room. Flies flew over the sink. There were no screens, just like in the song: "The window she is broken and the rain she's coming in..." Terry was at home now and puttering around pots. The sisters giggled over True Love Magazines in Spanish showing daguerrotype brown covers of lovers in great, somehow darker more passionate throes, with long sideburns and huge worries and burning secret eyes. The little children screamed in the road, roosters ran around. When the sun came out red through the clouds of my last valley afternoon Terry led me to Farmer Heffelfinger's barn. Farmer Heffelfinger had a prosperous farm up the road. We put crates together, she brought blankets from the house, and I was all set except for a great hairy tarantula that lurked at the pinpoint top of the barnroof. Terry said it wouldn't harm me if I didn't bother it. I lay on my back and stared at it. I went out to the cemetery and climbed a tree. In the tree I sang "Blue Skies." Terry and Raymond sat in the

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grass; we had grapes. In California you chew the juice out of the grapes and spit the skin and pits away, the gist of the grape is always wine. Nightfall came. Terry went home for supper and came to the barn at nine o'clock with my secret supper of delicious tortillas and mashed beans. I lit a woodfire on the cement floor of the barn to make light. We made love on the crates. Terry got up and cut right back to the shack. Her father was yelling at her, I could hear him from the barn. "Where have you been? What you doing running around at night in the fields?" Words to that effect. She'd left me a cape to keep warm, some old Spanish garment, I threw it over my shoulder and skulked through the moonlit vineyard to see what was going on. I crept to the end of a row and kneeled in the warm dirt. Her five brothers were singing melodious songs in Spanish. The stars bent over the little roof; smoke poked from the stovepipe chimney. I smelled mashed beans and chili. The old man growled. The brothers kept right on singing. The mother was silent. Raymond and the kids were giggling on one vast bed in the bedroom. A California home; I hid in the grapevines digging it all. I felt like a million dollars; I was adventuring in the crazy American night. Terry came out slamming the door behind her. I accosted her on the dark road. "What's the matter?"

"Oh we fight all the time. He wants me to go to work tomorrow. He says he don't want me fooling around with boys. Sallie-boy I want to go to New York with you."

"But how?"

"I don't know honey. I'll miss you. I love you."

"But I can't stay here."

"You say what you like, I know what you mean. Yes yes, we lay down one more time then you leave." We went back to the barn; I made love to her under the tarantula. What was the tarantula doing? We slept awhile on the crates as the fire died. She went back at midnight; her father was drunk; I could hear him roaring; then there was silence as he fell asleep. The stars folded over the sleeping countryside.

In the morning Father Heffelfinger stuck his head through the horse gate and said "How you doing young fella?"

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"Fine. I hope it's all right my staying here."

"Sure. You going with that little Mexican floozie?"

"She's a very nice girl."

"Pretty too. S'got blue eyes. I think the bull jumped the fence there..." We talked about his farm.

Terry brought my breakfast. I had my handbag all packed and ready to go back east, as soon as I picked up my money in Sadinal. I knew it was waiting there for me. I told Terry I was leaving. She had been thinking about it all night and was resigned to it. Emotionlessly she kissed me in the vineyards and walked off down the row. We turned at a dozen paces, for love is a duel, and looked at each for the last time. "See you in New York Terry," I said. She was supposed to drive to New York in a month with her brother. But we both knew she wouldn't make it somehow. At a hundred feet I turned to look at her. She just walked on back to the shack, carrying my breakfast plate in one hand. I bowed my head and watched her. Well lackadaddy, I was on the road again. I walked down the highway to Sabinal eating black walnuts from the walnut tree then on the railroad track balancing on the rail.

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ORPHEUS
IN THE UNDERWORLD

Night, dark night, night of my distress...
The moon is glittering with all the tears
Of the long silence and unhappiness
Of those who loved in vain for many years.

And so it glittered on the sleeping town
When Orpheus alone and sadly went
To death, to fetch Eurydice, and down
The fearful road pursued his dark descent.

Here were the walls, the gates where death had set
His warnings—in a city carved in stone
The citizens were busy; farmers whet
Their scythes in meadows never to be mown.

The kings and judges sat in their high places.
Then, at the sound of a loud trumpet blown,
They crowded, with pale terror on their faces,
From Death ascending to his dreadful throne.

Orpheus entered. As the eery light
Dwindled, he grasped his lute, and stumbling bent
His footsteps through the thick, enshrouding night.
Then suddenly, the lute by accident

Was struck—the sound exploded like a star
And shone and faded, and the Echoes woke
And danced, and ran before him. In the far
Corridors it seemed the silence spoke.

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He touched the strings again, began to play
In the same order. Fearfully he went
Toward the Echoes, and they still gave way.
And so he followed his own instrument.

At last to the deep hall of death he came.
And there the King sat, motionless and dread.
The night coiled from his nostrils like a flame;
The eyes lacked luster in the massive head.

And by his icy feet, pale in her shroud,
The beautiful Eurydice was laid.
Orpheus knelt beside her, and he bowed
His head, and touched the lute again, and played.

Night, dark night, night of my distress...
Once by the Mediterranean in May
I heard a nightingale, and the sadness of roses
In the murmuring wind, but this was sadder than they.

Night, dark night, night of my distress...
I too have waked her, seen the heavy shawl
Of night slip from her shoulders, and the darkness
Fly from her open eyes. And through the hall,

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Through cities and the country of the dead
With the one I loved, hand in hand, have gone.
The dog of death was quiet as we fled,
And so we passed, as shadows over stone.

Under the hills in their enormous silence
And by the sea where it was always still,
I felt her hand in mine, the fearful sense
Of mortal love. And so we fled, until

I turned toward her. With a cry she vanished.
Goodbye, pale shadow of my happiness!
I to the light have been forever banished,
The night, the night, the night of my distress.

Then Orpheus pursued his lonely way
Upward into the world, and a strange glory
Shone from his face. The trees, when he would play,
Were moved, and roses wept to hear his story.

It's Orpheus in the wind. His music grieves
The moon. He tells the water of his loss.
And all the birds are silent, and the leaves
Of summer in that music sigh and toss.

—LOUIS SIMPSON

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The pimps alone didn't seem to catch on that the country was progressing downward to new rates of normality. They had been progressing downward for some time without even knowing that [redacted] they were in style. Now of a sudden they discovered themselves with more girls than beds to put them on. [redacted] Scarcely-Twenties looking for a Daddy, any old Daddy who'd tell them where to lie down. [redacted] landlords and landladies passed them on to the cabbies and the cabbies passed them on to the pimps. If was then, between prostitution and prohibition, that the ancient color line was finally breached.

Negro bellboys had gained a virtual monopoly on the delivery of illicit alcohol and had found that white male guests either wanted a woman with the bottle or a bottle with the woman. The errand-boys' work evolved into soliciting [redacted] Immediately, he looked with scorn upon his own women. Like the Negro policeman, the Negro pimp was harder on his own people than was the white [redacted]-pander.

He saw now [redacted], at first hand, that what his Mama had told him, [redacted] was not true after all: that "good" white folks never acted bad black ones. For he saw men with [redacted] the best [redacted] names in town, the old family names, the supper-boys [redacted] and women with wolves in the Saturday stews, [redacted] do-right [redacted] howling like [redacted] beat poet, and [redacted] on the floor, yet knew [redacted] back with his family [redacted] Do-Right Daddy would be [redacted] come Sunday mornings in the pew with best manners [redacted] family in time for the Sunday morning sermon.

The Negro began [redacted] the white woman [redacted] there and then. He gave her the choice of moving over or being turned in to the law. The errand boy became an informer as well as solicitor [redacted] times weren't as bad as the papers made out.

A manuscript page from Nelson Algren's recently completed book:
A Walk on the Wild Side

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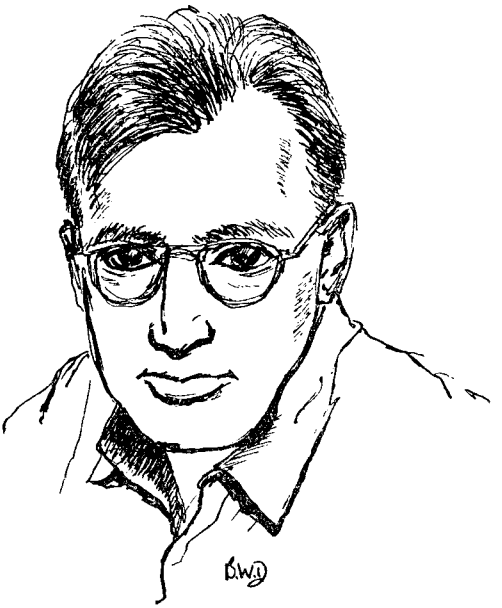

THE ART OF FICTION XI

NELSON ALGREN

Nelson Algren's novel, *The Man With the Golden Arm*, received the National Book Award as being the most distinguished American novel published in 1949. His other books include two novels, *Somebody in Boots* and *Never Come Morning*, a volume of short stories entitled *The Neon Wilderness*, and his impressions of a city, *Chicago: City on the Make*. For a number of years he lived in Chicago which provided

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the setting for much of his work. Now married, he lives in Gary, Indiana.

He makes his living writing, has no set routine for working at it, nor seriously feels the need of one; he finds that he works best, or most frequently, at night, and he composes on the typewriter. He strikes one as a man who feels and means just what he says, and often says it in the same way he dresses—with a good-humored nonchalance that is at once uniquely American, and, in the latter-day sense, quite un-American: his tie, if he ever wore one, would very likely be as askew as his syntax often is. He is a man who betrays no inclination whatsoever towards politeness, but he has a natural generosity and compassion. To talk with Algren is to have a conversation brought very quickly to that rarefied level where values are actually declared.

* * *

INTERVIEWERS

Did you have any trouble getting *The Man With the Golden Arm* published?

ALGREN

No, no. Nothing was easier, because I got paid before I wrote it. It got a very lucky deal because they had an awful lot of money, the publishers did, during the war... Doubleday had a big backlog. I was working for Harper's, that is, I'd *done* one novel. Under the way they operate... well, it's a very literary house; I mean, they'd give you, oh, maybe a five-hundred dollar advance, and then you're on your own. And then if the book goes in two years...well, but I mean, *you* take the risk. They pay in literary prestige, they have an editor who once edited something by Thomas Wolfe or something; they figure that way. And I didn't see it, just didn't know what the score was, you see. So a guy from Doubleday came along and I said what I wanted was enough to live on by the week for a year. And he said, "what do you call enough to live on?" and I said, "fifty dollars"... which seemed like a lot to me then... and he said, "well, how about

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sixty dollars for *two* years?" He raised it himself, see; I mean, they were author-stealing, of course, and ah... well, I had a very bad contract at Harper's anyhow. So they gave me that sixty a week deal for two years, which was very generous then, and... I told them I was going to write a *war* novel. But it turned out to be this "Golden Arm" thing. I mean, the war kind of slipped away, and these people with the hypos came along... and that was it. But they have so much money it's fantastic. It's very hard to get out of the habit of thinking you're going to kill them if you ask for fifty a week.

INTERVIEWERS

Which of your books sold the most?

ALGREN

That was the only book that sold. The others never sold much except in paperbooks.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you think of *The Man With the Golden Arm* as being very autobiographical?

ALGREN

Oh, to some extent I drew on some people I knew in a half-way... I made some people up and ah... the "Dealer" was... sort of a mixture; I got two, I dunno, two, three guys in mind. I know a couple guys around there... I knew *one* guy especially had a lot of those characteristics, but it's never clearly one person.

INTERVIEWERS

Well, anyway, you do think of some *one* person who could have started you thinking about Frankie Machine, since, apparently, you had at first planned an entirely different book.

ALGREN

The only connection I can make is... well, I was thinking about a war novel, and I had a buddy—little Italian bookie—pretty good dice-shooter, and he always used that phrase.

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We'd go partners... he's a *fairly* good crap-shooter...I mean, he's always good for about three passes. And then I'd say, "pick it up, Joe, pick it up," and he'd say, "*don't* worry, gotta golden arm." Then he'd come out with a crap. He never picked it up at all... but that's where I got that title. That was a guy I knew in the Army. It has no connection, it just happened to fit in later.

INTERVIEWERS

How do you think you arrived at it thematically... rather than a war novel?

ALGREN

Well, if you're going to write a war novel, you have to do it while you're *in* the war. If you don't do the thing while you're there... at least the way I operate... you can't do it. It slips away. Two months after the war, it was gone; but I was living in a *living* situation, and... I find it pretty hard to write on anything in the past... and this thing just got more real; I mean, the neighborhood I was living in, and these people, were a lot more *real* than the Army was.

INTERVIEWERS

What was the neighborhood you were living in?

ALGREN

Near Division Street.

INTERVIEWERS

Was this one of those books that "wrote itself"?

ALGREN

No. No, it didn't write itself. But I didn't have to contrive it... I mean, the situation hits you and you react to it, that's all.

INTERVIEWERS

Did it occur to you that this might be an unusual treatment of tragedy, using a protagonist like Frankie Machine?

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ALGREN

No, I didn't think of it that way at all. I didn't think of it essentially as a tragedy. I was just going along with that situation, and... well, I'd already *written* the book; I mean, I'd spent almost two years on the book before I ever ran into a drug addict. I wasn't acquainted with that situation at all. I had the book written about a *card-dealer*, but there wasn't any dope angle at all. It crossed my mind once or twice that that would be dramatic as hell, but I didn't know anything about it. I thought it would be better to lay off if you don't *know*, and I didn't see how you'd go about finding out about something like that deliberately... so I dropped it. Somehow I didn't fit it in. You see, I'd sent the book to the agent, and the agent said she liked it and all that, but it needed a *peg*, it didn't seem to be hung on anything. But it's real curious when I think of it now how obvious a thing is you don't see it. I mean, I was thinking about what to hang this book on, and I was hanging with these guys by that time. Well, one of these guys is a guy I know a long time... a guy done a lot of time... just a Polish guy used to drink a lot, that's all... and he said, "let's go out for a beer," so we go down on Madison Street. And it was late, I remember it was about two in the morning and I wanted to get in... it was raining... and he said, "well, I just live across the street," so we ducked, you know, through doors, up, around, up... and first thing I see this guy standing behind the curtain, I see this arm swinging, but I was so full of beer I didn't make anything too *clear* about it. It didn't dawn on me then, but it bothered me that somebody should be there swinging his arm up and down, you know, and somebody said, "Rich is having trouble," or something like that. I was sort of bothered... I didn't quite know .. and then a bunch of them come over, and I had a helluva time putting that situation together. I didn't get it, they would come in and out with little cigar-boxes under their arms and a guy would say to me, "we're just having breakfast, would you like some breakfast?" and I'd say, "no, I guess I had breakfast." So he said, "you want to see how it's done?" I said, "hell no, I don't want to see

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how it's done." I felt... well, I have an aversion to needles, anyway; I had it in the Army... but I felt, you know, if you want to do it, that's *your* business... I mean, if a guy goes into the can with a cigar-box under his arm, I don't want no part of *that*, I don't *want* to see it. Well, then I see that Rich is on junk, but he says with him it don't make any difference, he can knock it off any time, you know? Just happens to be one of these guys it don't get the better of. So I said, "well, he's lucky, I guess he knows what he's doing." Well, I'd go over there... I'd stop and buy, you know, a few bottles of beer or something like that... I mean there was never anything to eat or drink in the joint. That bothered me... maybe one can of beans on the shelf... people that don't eat and don't drink. So I'd bring up half a dozen bottles of beer or something, and nobody'd want a beer... I didn't get it. There'd never be anything to eat, so I'd say, "let's go down and get something to *eat*." So a girl comes down with me, and I was going to the butcher shop... get some meat and potatoes... she went to the bakery and got chocolate rolls, sweet rolls, rolls with sugar on them... I say, "Jesus, that's *dessert*." I said, "what the hell, don't you people *eat*?" And she just says, "got a sweet tooth." Well, it got plain enough. Sometimes it made me mad... I always thought I was getting fooled, see. I mean, these guys would come on with, "lemme have a..." you know, hit you for a few bucks, try you out... and I'd come up; I was a *fairly* good mark, not *too* good a mark... so this one guy says, "*you* know what I do. Sure I hit it a little for kicks, but when it starts getting the better of me, that's all." You know the kind of guy, just naturally strong. I mean, I believed him. Then his wife calls up: "Rich is sick." So I said, "why don't you get a doctor?" And she said, "well, he can't exactly get a doctor," and "why don't they come by and get you in a cab because he wants his own doctor," or something. So two of these goofs come by in a cab and we go up North, in a hotel, out, got nine bucks, up and down, around a corner, ducking up and down, then back to Rich, and poor son of a bitch, he come out and he was bawling... this was

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the strong guy... he was crying and just pouring sweat. I guess he lost about fifteen pounds that day. He came out with a real sheepish look, like "well, you know, it happens to everybody." So I felt a little contemptuous of him. Then these other people had come in, and I had different reactions with one or two of them, like this one guy I used in... well, he wasn't Frankie Machine, but when I think of him I think of this guy. He had a pushed-in kind of mug. I felt much more sympathetic toward him because... see, Rich was on it, but he was *for* it, too; I mean, he really wanted it to be that way... but this guy was on it, but he didn't want to be. He was against it. There was a girl there, too, who was like that, never should've been on it. So the swindle got faster and faster. I had an ideal place for them to come up and fix, so I didn't think anything of it. They'd just come up and fix, and that was it. I got along with them pretty good... but it took me a remarkably long time to make any connection between that and the book. I didn't want to go over to their place because it took time from the book; I felt I shouldn't have been goofing off like that. But I enjoyed going over there. We'd sit around and they'd always have music... they didn't always go right for the needle, you know, a lot of times they didn't have it... Then I began to feel very dimly that maybe there was something there usable. I thought about it very... timidly, and finally I said to the agent, "you think that uh... do you think it's too sensational?" She said, "No, use it." She insisted that I use it, so I hung it on there; I hung it on there without really knowing a great deal about it. It was an afterthought. I got the mood of the thing, but I didn't have much time to, you know, do it thoroughly. I know a little bit more about it now, but what I learned, I learned after the book came out.

INTERVIEWERS

Did you ever feel that you should try heroin... in connection with writing a book about users?

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ALGREN

No. No, I think you can do a thing like that best from a detached position.

INTERVIEWERS

Were you ever put down by any of these people as an "caves-dropper"?

ALGREN

No, they were mostly amused by it. Oh, they thought it was a pretty funny way to make a living, but... well, one time, after the book came out, I was sitting in this place, and there were a couple of junkies sitting there, and this one guy was real *proud* of the book; he was trying to get this other guy to read it, and finally the other guy said he had *read* it, but he said, "you know it ain't so, it ain't like that." There's a part in the book where this guy takes a shot, and then he's talking for about four pages. This guy says, "you know it ain't like that, a guy takes a fix and he goes on the nod, I mean, you know that." And the other guy says, "well, on the other hand, if he *really* knew what he was talking about, he couldn't write the book, he'd be out in the can." So the other guy says, "well, if you mean, is it all right for squares, sure, it's all right for squares." So, I mean, you have to compromise. But the book was somehow incidental to my relationship with them inasmuch as they always had some hassle going on, and... well, this needle thing wasn't always up front, you know. I mean, these were people you just went to hear a band with,... it was only now and then it'd come to you... like it might suddenly occur to you that one of your friends is crippled or something... it would come to you that the guy's on stuff. But it didn't stay with you very much.

INTERVIEWERS

Were you conscious of having a model for Zosh?

ALGREN

No, no, I think that was kind of an invented thing. One of those things you pick up in the papers... sometimes there's

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a story about a woman chasing the old man around with a mattress-board all night... that sort of thing. I get a lot of things from the papers.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you ever plot a thing out... mechanically?

ALGREN

No, I never tried to do that. I did it with this last book *A Walk on the Wild Side*, but that was the first time I tried it. Up to now, I'd just go along with the story and then sort of prop it up... plots that don't really stand up, but now in this last one... whether the book itself stands up as a literary thing I don't know... but I *was* surprised when I went through it that I'd contrived better because the plot dovetailed and that was the first time I was able to do that. This "Golden Arm" thing is really very creaky as far as plot goes... it's more of a cowboy and Indian thing, a cops-and-robber thing.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you write in drafts?

ALGREN

Yes, but each draft gets a little longer. I don't try to write the whole thing in one draft.

INTERVIEWERS

How much do you usually write before you begin to re-write?

ALGREN

Very little, I dunno, maybe five pages. I've always figured the only way I could finish a book and get a plot was just to keep making it longer and longer until something happens... you know, until it finds its own plot... because you can't outline and then fit the thing into it. I suppose it's a slow way of working.

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INTERVIEWERS

Do you think of any particular writers as having influenced your style, or approach?

ALGREN

Well, I used to like Stephen Crane a lot... and, it goes without saying, Dostoievsky... that's the only Russian I've ever re-read. No, that ain't all, there's Kuprin.

INTERVIEWERS

How about American writers?

ALGREN

Well, Hemingway is pretty hard not to write like.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you think you write like that?

ALGREN

No, but you get the feeling from it... the feeling of economy.

INTERVIEWERS

How about Farrell?

ALGREN

Well, I don't feel he's a good writer. Since *Studs Lonigan*, I don't know of anything of his that's new or fresh or well-written. Frankly, I just don't see him. I *missed* Farrell, let's put it that way.

INTERVIEWERS

Some of the reviews have linked you and Farrell...

ALGREN

I don't think he's a writer, really. He's too journalistic for my taste. I don't get anything besides a social-study, and not always well told either. He has the same lack that much

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lesser-known writers have. He hits me the same way as, say... a guy like Hal Ellson. Do you know him? Well, he's a New York writer who does this gang stuff. He's written some very good books, but they're just straight case-studies, you know what I mean?

INTERVIEWERS

How about Horace McCoy?

ALGREN

No, no, I didn't mean to put Farrell down there. No, Farrell, I think, is a real earnest guy... but I mention this Ellson because Ellson does the same thing. But, I mean, there's something awfully big left out. It isn't enough to do just a case-study... something stenographic. Farrell is stenographic, and he isn't even a real good stenographer. He's too sloppy. In his essays he compares himself with Dreiser, but I don't think he's in Dreiser's league. He's as *bad* a writer as Dreiser... but he doesn't have the compassion that makes Dreiser's bad writing important.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you have a feeling of camaraderie, or solidarity, with any contemporary writers?

ALGREN

No, I couldn't say so. I don't know many writers.

INTERVIEWERS

How do you avoid it?

ALGREN

Well, I dunno, but I do have the feeling that other writers can't help you with writing. I've gone to writer's conferences and writer's sessions and writer's clinics, and the more I see of them... the more I'm sure it's the wrong direction. It isn't the place where you learn to write. I've always felt strongly that a writer shouldn't be engaged with other writers, or

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with people who make books, or even with people who read them. I think the further away you get from the literary traffic, the closer you are to sources. I mean, a writer doesn't really *live*... he observes.

INTERVIEWERS

Didn't Simone de Beauvoir dedicate a book to you?

ALGREN

Yeah, I showed her around Chicago. I showed her the electric chair and everything.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you vote? Locally, there around Gary?

ALGREN

No. No, I don't.

INTERVIEWERS

Still you do frequently get involved in these issues, like the Rosenbergs, and so on.

ALGREN

Yes, that's true.

INTERVIEWERS

What do your publishers think of that?

ALGREN

Well, they don't exactly give me any medals for caution.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you think there's been any sort of tradition of isolation of the writer in America, as compared to Europe?

ALGREN

We don't have any tradition at *all* that I know of. I don't think the isolation of the American writer is a tradition;

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it's more that geographically he just *is* isolated... unless he happens to live in New York City. But I don't suppose there's a small town around the country that doesn't have a writer. The thing is that here you get to be a writer differently. I mean, a writer like Sartre *decides*, like any professional man, when he's 15, 16 years old, that instead of being a doctor, he's going to be a writer. And he absorbs the French tradition, and proceeds from there. Well, here you get to be a writer when there's absolutely nothing else you can do. I mean, I don't know of any writers here who just started out to be writers, and then became writers. They just happen to fall into it.

INTERVIEWERS

How did you fall into it?

ALGREN

Well, I fell into it when I got out of a school of journalism in '31 in the middle of the depression. I had a little card that entitled me to a job because I'd gone to this school of journalism, you see. I was just supposed to present this card to the editor. I didn't know whether I wanted to be a sports columnist, foreign correspondent, or what; I was willing to take what was open. Only, of course, it wasn't. Things were pretty tight. Small towns would send you to big cities, and big cities would send you to small towns; it was a big hitchhiking time, so I wound up in New Orleans... selling coffee... one of these door-to-door deals... and one of the guys on this crew said we ought to get out of there because he had a packing-shed in the Rio Grande Valley. So we bummed down to the Rio Grande. Well, he didn't have a packing-shed, he *knew* somebody who had one... one of those things, you know... but what he did do, he promoted a Sinclair gasoline station down there. It was a farce, of course, it was an abandoned station, in the middle of nowhere; I mean, there was no chance of selling gas or anything like that, but I suppose it looked good for the Sinclair agent to write up to Dallas and say he had a couple guys rehabilitating the place.

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There was nothing to the station, it didn't even have any windows. But we had to dig pits for the gas, and then one day the Sinclair guy comes up with a hundred gallons of gas and wanted somebody to take legal responsibility for it. So my partner hands me the pencil and says, "well, you can write better than I can, you been to school," and I was sort of proud of that, so I signed for it. Then my partner had the idea that I should stay there and take care of the station, just keep up a front, you know, in case the Sinclair guy came around, and he'd go out... he had an old Studebaker... and buy up produce from the Mexican farmers very cheap, and bring it back and we'd sell it at the station... turn the station into a produce stand. I mean, we were so far out on this highway that the agent couldn't really check on us... we were way out; there were deer and wild hogs and everything out there... and in three weeks we'd be rich. That was *his* idea. But the only thing he brought back was black-eyed peas. He paid about two-dollars for a load of black-eyed peas... well, that was like buying a load of cactus... but he wouldn't admit he'd made a mistake. So, he went around to the big Piggly-Wiggly store and they said they'd take *some* of the peas if they were shelled. So he set me to shelling the peas. I shelled those damn peas till I was nearly blind. In the meantime, he'd left town, out to promote something else. Then one day he showed up with another guy, in a much better looking car... he'd left the old Studebaker there at the station... and I saw them out there by the pit fooling around with some sort of contraption, but it didn't dawn on me... and then it turned out they were siphoning the gas into this guy's car. Well, they left town before I knew what was happening. When I caught on I was being swindled, of course, I was very indignant about it, and I wrote letters that took in the whole South. I gave the whole Confederacy hell. Oh, it was nowhere, just nowhere, nowhere. So I wrote a couple letters like that... and I was very serious at the time, and some of that got into the letters. Ultimately, I got out of there... I poured a lot of water into the empty tank, but I felt like a fugitive because I didn't account to the

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Sinclair guy. It was a terrible farce, but later when I got home... I don't know how much later... I read the letters again, and there was a story in them all right. So I re-wrote it and *Story Magazine* published it, and I was off. But that's what I mean by "falling into it." Because I was really trying to become a big oil man.

INTERVIEWERS

Have you consciously tried to develop a style?

ALGREN

Well, I haven't consciously tried to develop it. The only thing I've consciously tried to do was put myself in a position to hear the people I wanted to hear talk talk. I used the police line-up for I don't know how many years. But that was accidental too, like that junky deal... you don't exactly seek it out, you're there and it dawns on you. I got a newspaper man to loan me his card, but that was only good for one night. But then I finally got rolled. I didn't get myself deliberately rolled; I was just over on the South Side and got rolled. But they gave me a card, you know, to look for the guys in the line-up, and I used that card for something like seven years... they finally stopped me... the card got ragged as hell, pasted here and there, you couldn't read it... the detective at the door stopped me and said, "what happened, you mean you're still looking for the guy?" This was like seven years later, and I said, "hell yes, I lost 14 dollars," so he let me go ahead.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you think then that you're more interested in idiom, than in idea? And isn't this generally characteristic of American writers?

ALGREN

That's cutting it pretty close all right. I think of a tragic example... Dick Wright. I think he made... a very bad mistake. I mean, he writes out of passion, out of his belly; but he won't admit this, you see. He's trying to write as an intellectual, which he isn't basically; but he's trying his best

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to write like a Frenchman. Of course, it isn't strictly an American-European distinction, the belly and the head; you find the same distinction here. A book like Ralph Ellison's, for example, or Peter Matthiessen's, stays better with me than the opposite thing, a book like Saul Bellow's. Bellow's is a book done with great skill and great control, but there isn't much fire. I depend more on the stomach. I always think of writing as a *physical* thing. I'm not trying to generalize, it just happens to be that way with me.

INTERVIEWERS

Can you relate *The Man With the Golden Arm* to an idea?

ALGREN

No, unless a feeling can be an idea. I just had an overall *feeling*, I didn't have any particular theory about what I ought to do. Living in a very dense area, you're conscious of how the people underneath live, and you have a certain feeling toward them... so much so that you prefer living among them than with the business classes. In a historical sense, it might be related to an idea, but you write out of... well, I wouldn't call it indignation, but a kind of *irritability* that these people on top should be so contented, so absolutely unaware of these other people, and so sure that their values are the right ones. I mean, there's a certain satisfaction in recording the people underneath... whose values are as sound as theirs, and a lot funnier, and a lot truer in a way. There's a certain overall satisfaction in kind scooping up a shovelful of these people and dumping them in somebody's parlor.

INTERVIEWERS

Were you trying to dramatize a social problem?

ALGREN

Well, there's always something wrong in any society. I think it would be a mistake to aim at any solution, you know; I mean, the most you can do is... well, if any writer can catch the *routine lives* of people just *living* in that kind of

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ring of fire to show how you can't go out of a certain neighborhood if you're addicted, or for other reasons, that you can't be legitimate, but that within that limitation you can succeed in making a life that is routine... with human values that seem to be a little more real, a little more intense, and human, than with people who are freer to come and go... if somebody could write a book about the routine of these circumscribed people, just their everyday life, without any big scenes, without any violence, or cops breaking in, and so on, just day-to-day life... like maybe the woman is hustling and makes a few bucks, and they get a little H just to keep from getting sick, and go to bed, and get up... just an absolutely prosaic life without any particular drama to it in their eyes... if you could just do that straight, without anybody getting arrested—there's always a little danger of that, of course—but to have it just the way these thousands of people live, very quiet, commonplace routine... well, you'd have an awfully good book.

INTERVIEWERS

On the point of style again, you seem to favor phrases, almost more than sentences.

ALGREN

I always thought my sentences were pretty good. But I do depend on phrases quite a bit.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you try to write a poetic prose?

ALGREN

No. No, I'm not writing it, but so many people say things poetically, they say it for you in a way you never could. Some guy just coming out of jail might say, "I did it from bell to bell," or like the 17 year old junkie, when the judge asked him what he did all day, said, "well, I find myself a doorway to lean against, and I take a fix, and then I lean, I just lean and dream." They always say things like that.

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INTERVIEWERS

What do you think of Faulkner?

ALGREN

Well, I can get lost in him awful easy. But he's powerful.

INTERVIEWERS

It's interesting that Hemingway once said that Faulkner and you were the two best writers in America.

ALGREN

Yeah, I remember when he said that. He said, "After Faulkner..." I was very hurt.

INTERVIEWERS

You said that the plot of *The Man With the Golden Arm* was "creaky". How much emphasis are you going to put on plot in your future writing?

ALGREN

Well, you have to prop the book up somehow. You've got to frame it, or otherwise it becomes just a series of episodes.

INTERVIEWERS

You gave more attention to plot in this book you've just finished.

ALGREN

This one I plotted a great deal more than any other. In the first place because it's more of a contrived book. I'm trying to write a reader's book, more than my own book. When you're writing your own book, you don't have to plot; it's just when you write for the reader. And since I'm dealing with the past, the thirties, I have to contrive... whereas, with a living situation, I wouldn't have to.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you think that this one came off as well as *The Man With the Golden Arm?*

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ALGREN

Mechanically, and I think, technically, it's done more carefully, and probably reads better than previous books.

INTERVIEWERS

You make this distinction between a "reader's book" and a book for yourself. What do you think the difference is?

ALGREN

Well, I think it's the difference between writing by yourself and writing on a stage. I mean, if the book were your own, you'd be satisfied just to have the guy walk down the sidewalk and fall on his head. In a reader's book, you'd have him turn a double-summersault. You're more inclined to clown, I think, in a reader's book. You've got one ear to the audience for yaks. It's just an obligation you have to fulfill.

INTERVIEWERS

Obligation to whom?

ALGREN

Well, you're talking economics now. I mean, the way I've operated with publishers is that I live on the future. I take as much money as I can get for as long as I can get it, you know, a year or two years, and by the end of that time your credit begins to have holes in it, and... well, you have to come up. After all, they're businessmen. Of course, you can get diverted from a book you *want* to write. I've got a book about Chicago on the West Side... I did a hundred pages in a year, and I still figure I need three years on it... but I was under contract for this other one, so it took precedence. I didn't want to contract for the first one, because I just wanted to go along as far as I could on it without having any pressure on me. The one I contracted for is the one I finished, and now I'm going back to the one I want to do.

INTERVIEWERS

Did you enjoy writing *The Man With the Golden Arm* more than you did this last one?

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ALGREN

Well, it seemed more important. I wouldn't say I enjoyed it more, because in a way this was a much easier book to do. The lumber is all cut for you. The timber and the dimensions are all there, you know you're going to write a 400 page book; and in that way your problems are solved, you're limited. Whereas, with a book like that *Man With the Golden Arm*, you cut your own timber, and you don't know where you're building... you don't have any plan on anything.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you find that you take more care with a thing like that?

ALGREN

No, I always take great care. I think I'm very careful... maybe too careful. You can get too fussy... I do find myself getting bogged down wondering whether I should use a colon, or a semi-colon, and so on, and I keep trying each one out. I guess you can overdo that.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you think that writing a book out of economic obligation could affect your other work?

ALGREN

No, it won't have anything to do with that at all. One is a matter of *living* and reacting from day to day... whereas the book I just finished could be written anywhere there's a typewriter.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you think your writing improves?

ALGREN

I think technically it does. I re-read my first book, and found it... oh, you know, "poetic", in the worst sense.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you feel that any critics have influenced your work?

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ALGREN

None could have, because I don't read them. I doubt anyone does, except other critics. It seems like a sealed-off field with its own lieutenants, pretty much preoccupied with its own intrigues. I got a glimpse into the uses of a certain kind of criticism this past summer at a writers' conference—into how the avocation of assessing the failures of better men can be turned into a comfortable livelihood, providing you back it up with a Ph. D. I saw how it was possible to gain a chair of literature on no qualification other than persistence in nipping the heels of Hemingway, Faulkner and Steinbeck. I know, of course, that there are true critics,—one or two. For the rest all I can say is, "Deal around me."

INTERVIEWERS

What's the name of your new book?

ALGREN

I'm going to call it *A Walk on the Wild Side*. Does that sound like anything? I've tried it on about a dozen people and they react all right.

INTERVIEWERS

What's it about?

ALGREN

Well, it's about New Orleans in the thirties.

INTERVIEWERS

You were there during the thirties.

ALGREN

Yeah, couple times, '31, '32.

INTERVIEWERS

How about this movie? *The Man With the Golden Arm?*

ALGREN

Yeah.

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INTERVIEWERS

Did you have anything to do with the script?

ALGREN

No. No, I didn't last long. I went out there for a thousand a week, and I worked Monday, and I got fired Wednesday. The guy that hired me was out of town Tuesday.

ALSTON ANDERSON
TERRY SOUTHERN

(This is the eleventh in a series on the Art of Fiction. Authors interviewed have included E. M. Forster, François Mauriac, Graham Greene, William Styron, Irwin Shaw, Alberto Moravia, Joyce Cary, Ralph Ellison, Georges Simenon, and James Thurber.)

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THE FABLE OF THE BEARS IN THE WINTER

I once saw weeping in a wood
The bears that break the heart of God
When dusty grapes hung from the trees
Revealed themselves as hosts of bees
And rose towards the pale winter sun
(It was *most swift and sweetly done*!)
They left their nests untenanted
But had they sallied forth, or fled?
For, standing in a ring below,
All the bears wept to see them go.

Cold winter is a secret season,
Frost and the wind confound the reason,
Perplexing every dying bee,
But it is the bears I weep to see.
When winter and the cold increase
Hiems Ursine, shield their peace!
Some shall eat humble beebread, some
Feed on the sumptuous honeycomb,
But none may come to feel or see
Holy sweets in the wintering tree.

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For once, to keep a Secret from
The bears, less fortunate than some,
God fixed it, with a wild device,
Tight and impressively in ice,
Still shaking feverishly and sunny,
Trapped like a fly in amber honey;
And to protect that shivering dancer
Padlocks were put upon the answer
So that the secrecy was sure
It was both golden and secure.

Warm bears, with fears as deep as ours
Can take delight in trees and flowers
And the bees' business, near and far,
And all their gold ambrosia.
But wet bears have no wits to measure
Cannot encompass such a treasure
Nor the assumption of the bees
Soft enfold those mysteries:
This final token of belief
Falls to the worst and shiftiest thief.

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He trafficks in ridiculous things,
Spots and scraps and wires and strings.
The dark suggestions of the winter
Urge the bad bird to pause and enter:
Let jackday, magpie, crane or jay
Enter then to rest and prey.
They never let their foul affairs
Breach the deep slumber of the bears,
Who once stood whispering in a ring
Now warm and innocent till spring.

Each wrapped in a brown indifferent bun,
The Bears, The Bears! Cruelly undone
By birds with eyes so cold and bright
Who come and cheat them in the night.
The Bears! The Bears! Watch how the frost
Leads dreams of golden gifts now lost
Into their anxious hearts, and deep
Among the silver gifts of sleep!
The while the real adventurer
Succeeds by being bald of fur).

The sleeping bear is sweet to see
But look you now, how easily
The daw the jaybird or the egret
Picks the lock and breaks the Secret.

—John Hollander

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ANTONI CLAVÉ, Catalan born, has become completely Parisian and brings to the French art world a rare exuberance and dash, both in the boldness of his brush and in his palette of black-and-gray spiced with scarlets and purples. His youth in Spain was of extreme poverty and hardship – he began at 14 to work long hours as a house-painter, but still was able to study at night in the *École des Beaux Arts* of his native Barcelona. At 26 he came to Paris and drew comic strips, music covers, posters until 1943. After the Liberation his first show of paintings at the *Galérie André Joly*, his first theatre designs [for two Roland Petit ballets: *Los Caprichos* and the celebrated *Carmen*] put him at once into the front rank of important painters. With delightful facility and constant invention he has created theatrical décors [*Ballabile* for Covent Garden, *Les noces de Figaro* for Aix-en-Provence, *Deuil en 24 heures* for Roland Petit, and Ruth Page's forthcoming ballet of *The Barber of Seville* at the Chicago Opera], about a dozen lithographs, book illustrations [*Carmen*, *La Dame Pique*, and the new Rabelais which is considered one of the great illustrated books of the half-century], a new show of paintings in Paris in 1953, in Rome and London this season. Clavé lives and paints in a little atelier on a garden not far from the corner of Boulevard du Montparnasse and the Boul' Mich'. His future plans: to paint, then to paint some more.

E. W.

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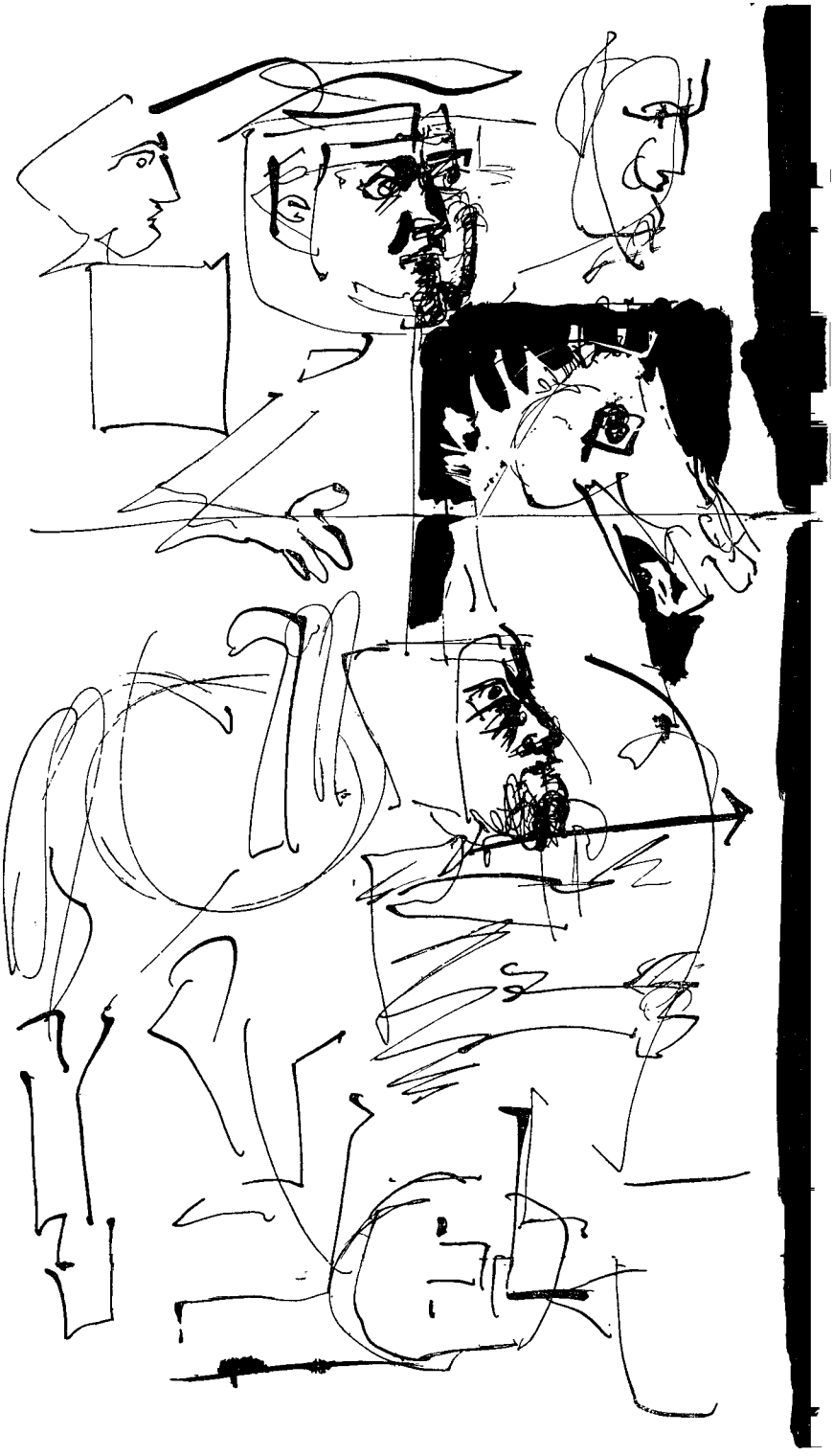

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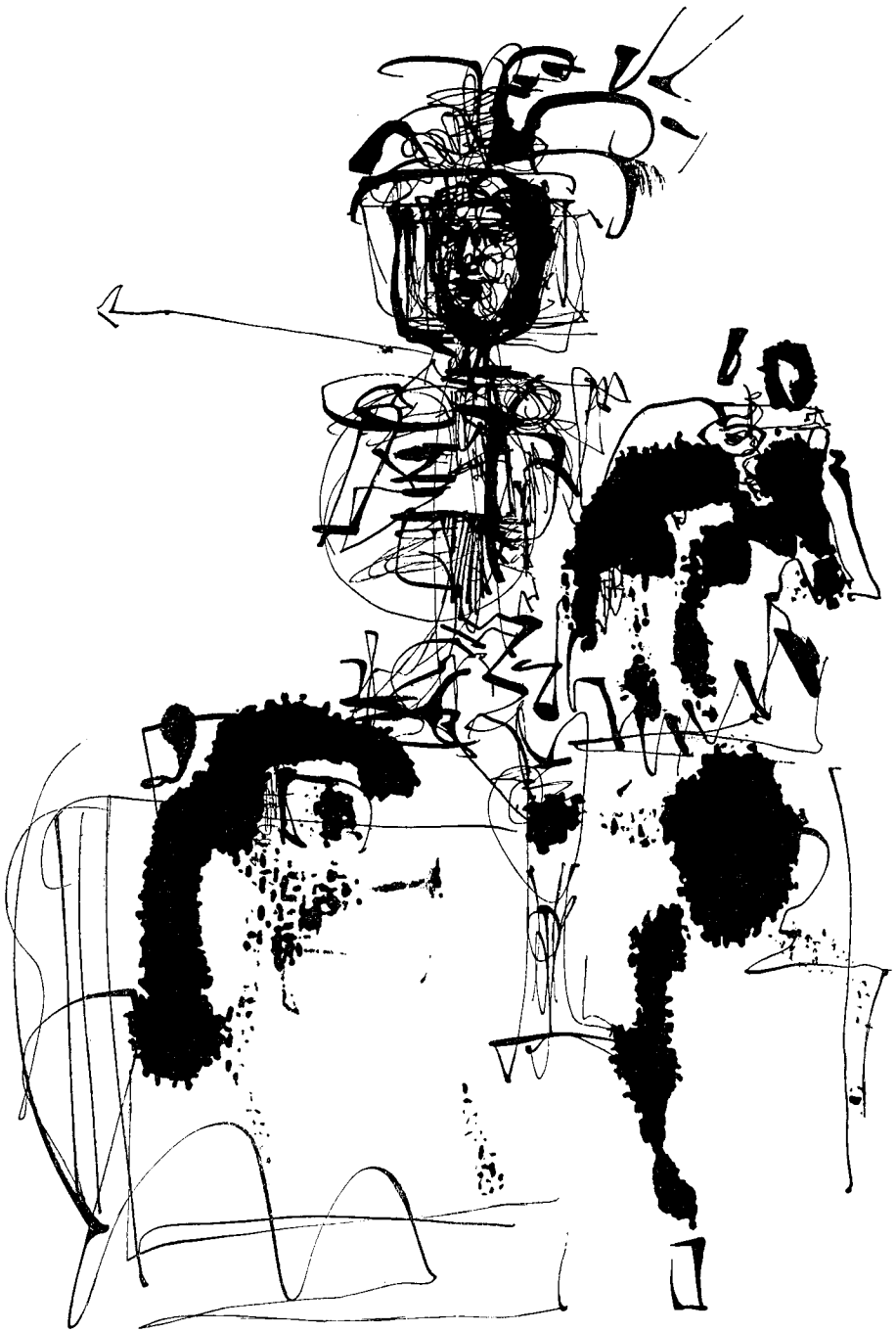

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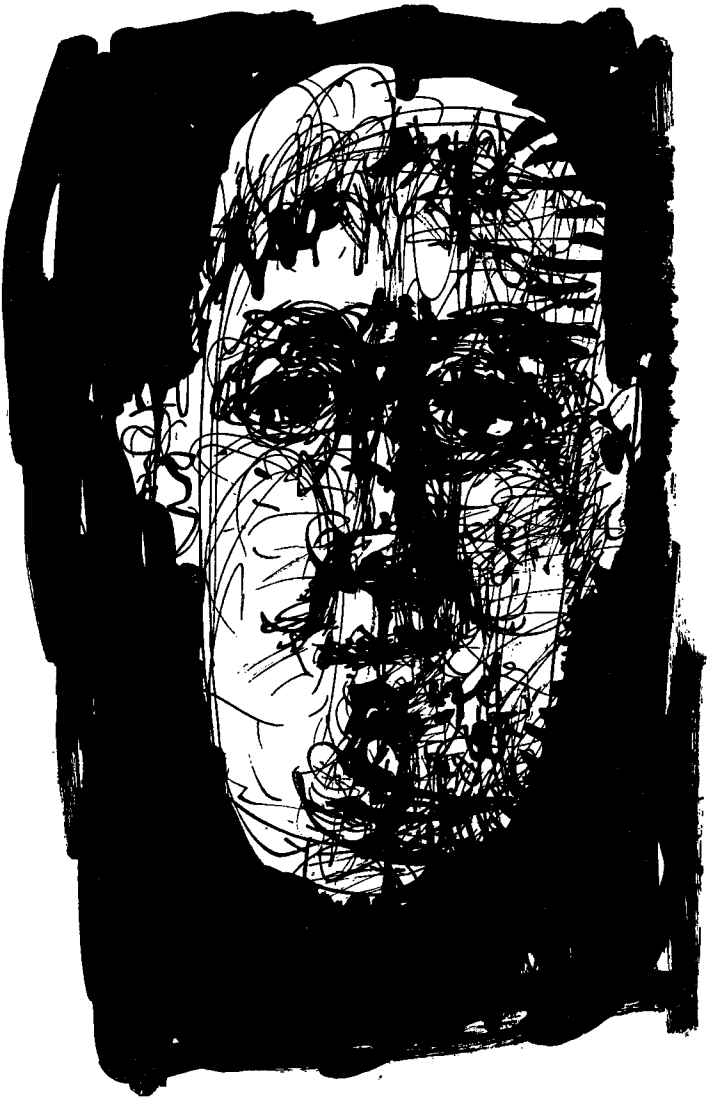

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SOW

There is an archipelago rising
Out of the green waters that, rippling
And swaying, are the oak tree's shadow
In the afternoon wood. A shoal of small islands
Lying sheltered, close off-shore to leeward
Of the one largest whose great coast looms there
White in the shifting dimness like
Chalk downs seen from far out through the dawn
Mist, or the clouded moon full-swollen:
The old sow asleep with her litter. When
The wind blows there is no white water
Spills seetheing in over the outer reefs, though the sound
Of the sea's edge plays all about there,
But only from the tree-top the leaves' long sighing
In the waving boughs lends to the silent
Rocking shadow the rustling water-words
That slide through the shallows of that island sleep;
And no tide-race pulls and rips in the dark
Narrows breathing between them, but so gently
Does the eddying darkness slip and brush
In all their harbours, flooding and slumbering
Deep in their valleys, and over their
Dim hills drifting without splash or sound
But itself altering to all their contours,
That if one stood and watched one could not tell
Whether indeed they were honest islands,
Firm above the sea's surface, or a mirage,

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Or a range sunk long ago whose white ghost
Only now had risen there through the deluding
Waters of afternoon. She is known, waking
For one fierce as foul, who can strike panic in
And put to flight whatever intruder,
Who treads unharmed on the adder, and will
Kill a grown man for the joy of it
With crushing and cruel mangling, or with
Weight worse than the nightmare's, will lie
On her own offspring at an ungainly whim
Or to hear the snap of many bones. But beyond this,
Of what she is in the waters of shadow,
Of those islands riding the green deep, such
Tales are told as would make one believe
That no man had ever visited them
And returned. For though it is said
That the worst of fates would be to founder
Near those shores and be cast up there,
They are flattered in fancy with fruit trees
And the abodes of saints; past coy rhymes
Cajoling the lesser coasts, are courted
In fables, called fair in fair tales
Where mariners, caught, cozened to swine-shapes,
Sink under shadows; until it would seem
As though they who spoke placated thereby
Some foul inevitability besetting
Voyagers, thus making desperate
Shift to show its hideous countenance
Both to itself and to them as a thing
Benign; or as though their breath, playing
In story over those coasts had come
To recognize itself as such a water
And shadow as white shores rose from
Upon whose fierce sleep it must break.

—W. S. MERWIN

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MARJORIE ANAÏS HOUSEPIAN

HOW LEVON DAI WAS SURRENDERED TO THE EDEMUSES

IT WAS a few weeks before Easter that Hadji read the cards for Levon Dai. "My heart is pulling for a sheep's head stew," she said one night after dinner. "It is eight years since I had kuluk, not since we left Cyprus, after the exile." They were sitting around the table, still, three hours after the the dinner began. A good dinner—eggplant, white beans, baked fish, creamy white Greek cheese, large round loaves of bread. Well fed, perhaps, yet not quite satisfied. Kelesh there, looking moodily into his coffee cup. Kelesh wanted a yogurt factory. He wanted it badly, but no one took him seriously. Kelesh was studying the classical antecedants of Dante at Columbia, and afternoons he frequented bingo parlors to earn the carfare to attend his classes. But he wanted most of all to open a yogurt factory. It was very confusing, probably even to Kelesh.

Uncle Boghos was an artist, but no-one took him seriously either. He painted from postal cards. Nostalgic scenes of the Bosphorus and the Red Sea; Saint Sophia at sundown. Everyone said: "Boghos, since when is the Bosphorus green?... Is that water, Boghos? It looks like grass... Sunset on the Sea of Marmara is never gaudy. Vivid, yes, but not gaudy. You have put in too much orange." Uncle Boghos was not a patient man, and he often collected his canvas and paints and retreated to the bedroom. But it was lonely in the bedroom and Boghos could not paint long in solitude. My mother encouraged Boghos, but he could never take her seriously. My mother encouraged everybody. She often expressed a willingness to do the worrying for everyone else in the family, feeling, I think

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that it was the least she could do—not having so many of her own—but the others were not willing to shed their prerogatives so easily, so mother concentrated mostly on her concern for Levon Dai who was away from the family circle and therefore much to be pitied. She sent him tins of greek cheese and stuffed grape leaves and olives—the large black pickled kind that he could not possibly be expected to find in Iowa. And now that Easter was approaching he had no doubt already received the offering, sent railway express, of Easter bread and topig: the spicy steamed patties that no decent Armenian could be without at this season. Levon Dai was not ungrateful. If he wrote letters only at monthly intervals when he enclosed the check that provided for his godmother old Marta-mama who had brought him up, everyone knew it was because he was not articulate about his misfortunes, or given to expressing his loneliness. But one could read between the lines. Levon Dai was an eccentric: he had made money, but one understood the price he had to pay and pitied him for it.

Hadji's husband, Uncle Pousant, worried more than anyone. He worried about the janitor, and the price of eggplant, and he worried about the American foreign policy and the English and the Bolsheviks. He worried especially about Hadji's refusal to worry.

"How can you sit there, woman, peacefully cracking your melon seeds when you know how hard it is to find fresh dill these days!" Uncle Pousant owned a restaurant and he could not cook without fresh dill. Nor could he cook without chick peas, or sesame seeds, or pine nuts, and they were all hard to find at decent prices. Hadji could really exasperate Uncle Pousant.

Only Hadji seemed sure of what she wanted. Right now she wanted sheep's head. This irritated Uncle Pousant. "Now you want me to go out and find "head"! It is not hard enough I have to rummage the town to find cracked wheat flour; it is not hard enough I have to endure the crooked looks of the fish woman as I beg her to leave on the heads of the fish. It is not hard enough I have to turn my face inside out to the butcher with pleas that he save me the liver of the lamb!

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Now I must go out and find 'head'!" Hadji said not a word.

"Perhaps you think that *I* don't crave head!" added Uncle Pousant. "All right, I will admit it. I lack courage. Why should I worry if he thinks I am a cannibal? They eat the foot of the pig, and I am ashamed to ask for the head of the sheep. Let me admit it, I am a coward." No one spoke.

"I am admitting it, am I not?" shouted Uncle Pousant, "Let me see you go out and ask for the head of the sheep!"

My mother changed the subject. There had been no letter from Levon Dai today, she said. This was hardly news but my mother knew it would serve.

"He cannot be coming for Easter," said Boghos. "Poor devil."

At Christmastime Levon had written that he could not come. Perhaps at Easter, he said. His hands were tied; the dry cleaning plant was thriving; he had to hire fifteen more men; it was hard to leave the factory for any length of time.

Uncle Pousant was not in a kind mood. "Levon Dai is a barbarian!" he said, "now that he is rich, he neglects his relatives. He has the soul of a donkey!"

"It is Levon's way," said my mother, "you cannot judge him as you do others. Marta-mama understands. Perhaps he will come in the summer."

"Levon perhaps is becoming Americanized," said Kelesh, "Americans do not admit relationships with cousins after the age of sixteen."

"Behold, the authority on America!" cried Uncle Pousant, who prided himself on being the first member of the family to emigrate.

"I have read," said Kelesh, "I have talked to people."

"And I, I do not read," said Pousant, "I am an illiterate because I did not go to the University and take courses in the philanderings of the ancients. DID YOU READ THE NEW YORK TIMES TODAY?" shouted Uncle Pousant.

"Not today," said Kelesh.

"Did you read it yesterday?" said Uncle Pousant, "do not talk."

"As a matter of fact I did," said Kelesh, "Yesterday, I did."

"The horse racing news," said Uncle Pousant, "The reports

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of the stock market. The puzzle of words. Ha! The rotogravure! I know how you read the papers. But then, you are educated." Kelesh began to sulk.

"Levon Dai takes after his father," said Hadji. Torcom Dai would never wear a fez, do you remember? When he came back from the German University he had become entirely European."

"Only in appearance," said my mother.

"All right, in appearance!" said Hadji, "even to the cut of his hair. 'If he went to America,' we used to say, 'he would be certain to wear feathers, like an Indian'."

"He brought back some fine reproductions from Germany." said Boghos. "Who knows what became of them. Then I remember the stories he told when he returned from the interior, after he had been commissioned to build the Sershap road. The Kurdish soldiers, he used to say, could not tell their left from their right. They tied garlic to one shoulder, onion to the other. 'Garlic-side, onion-side' the leaders would shout, and the soldiers marched."

"He was a good man," said Hadji, "but he talked too much. He should have stayed in Europe, he would have lived longer."

"In America he would have made a fortune," said my mother.

"Of what good is money," said Uncle Pousant, "If like Levon Dai one must live in Iowa?"

"Perhaps Levon *likes* Iowa," Kelesh suggested, sarcastically.

"What is there in Iowa?" asked Pousant.

"Pigs and corn," said Kelesh.

"There is a limit to what one can endure," said Uncle Pousant.

"It must be a famine, both to the eyes and to the mind," said Boghos. "No mountains, no sea, no antiquity."

"He should at least come to New York and find a wife," said my mother, "There is Mardiros Pilafian's daughter, now. She is both beautiful and intelligent, and if the poor girl does not get married soon she must return to Rumania. They say, so far she has not found anyone she is willing to marry."

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"And you are going to send a nice girl like that to Iowa?" cried Uncle Pousant, "have you no heart?"

"Iowa cannot be worse than Rumania," said my mother, "At any rate it is nearer."

"Who knows what they *eat* in Iowa," said Hadji.

"Mayonnaise on pears, probably," said Kelesh.

"Please!" said Uncle Pousant, "you are upsetting my stomach."

Hadji began to rummage in the folds of a voluminous skirt that abounded with pockets. She withdrew a deck of cards and began silently to deal them, solitaire style, on the table. "At what time will the doctor be coming home?" she asked when they were all laid out.

"Late," said my mother, "he had a call in Brooklyn and one in Jamaica."

"I have not read the cards for Levon Dai since before he bought the factory," said Hadji. "Let us see."

"You said then he would spend money, and make money," said my mother. "His letter came two weeks later. How can I forget?"

Hadji rolled her sleeves and licked the tip of her finger before she began to shift the cards systematically from place to place.

"Pick a card," she said to my mother, who uncovered the seven of hearts.

"A-ha!" said Hadji, "there is a romance. He is thinking of getting married."

"You are joking!" said my mother, "who would he marry in Iowa? Has he someone in mind?"

"You do not have a romance without having someone in mind," said Uncle Pousant.

"That depends," said my mother, "more often men do not have someone in mind until after they begin to feel like getting married."

Hadji silently manoevered the cards. "Draw another," she said at last. This time mother drew the queen of diamonds. "He has found someone," said Hadji, "a blonde."

"He would!" said Uncle Pousant.

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"Oh dear, I was afraid of that," said my mother, "all the same you would think he would write us." Hadji uncovered another card.

"We will get a letter," said Hadji, "He is still making up his mind."

"Levon was never one to write much," said my mother, "But on an occasion like this..."

"We will be getting a letter," said Hadji.

"He could have come to New York and looked around, before making up his mind."

"It is too late now," said Hadji, "he has someone."

"And I did have my heart set on Satenig Pilafian," said my mother wistfully.

The letter arrived ten days later. Not being much given to words, Levon Dai told little more than the fact of his engagement and the information that his fiancee's name was Shirley Adams.

"Shiran Edemus!" snorted Uncle Pousant, "What kind of a name is that!" Mother explained that Shiran did not mean the same thing in English, and besides the name was Shirl*ee*, not Shiran.

"Shiran, Shiree, what's the difference: it sounds obscene," said Uncle Pousant.

Levon Dai enclosed a newspaper clipping that was slightly more explicit than his letter, and a picture of Shirley. Mr. Levon Melkonian, the clipping said,—the same Mr. Melkonian who owned the Tru-Clean drycleaning plant on Kelmer Avenue and had recently been installed as High Priest of the North Gate Chapter, 2, Royal Staff Masons, was engaged to Miss Shirley Adams who was well known for her "exquisite collection of miniature glass animals." The picture showed a pixie face, smiling. Shirley was slender, and blonde.

"Very pretty", said my mother, "except that all her features point upward. It is not a sign of intelligence I'm afraid."

"She looks tuberculous to me," said Hadji.

"Did you say animals of glass?" Uncle Pousant asked when mother had finished translating the article.

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"It says so," mother said, re-reading the article, "small ones."

"I wash my hands of him!" said Uncle Pousant. "What sort of foolishness is this! High Priest!"

"We can drink a toast to the occasion," said mother sadly. "It's the least we can do." She went to the kitchen, returning with the decanter of raki on a tray, surrounded by six small glasses. I noticed with satisfaction that the occasion warranted my getting a drop.

"To the High Priest of Iowa culture and his future bride, she who collects animals of glass." said Uncle Pousant raising his glass, "May they be blessed with long life and myriads of children."

"She does not look as though that were possible," interrupted Hadji.

"Its a figure of speech. You take everything literally, woman. May they be blessed with wealth, and yet not forget the values of the spirit." He lifted the glass to his lips.

"You have not finished the toast," said Hadji. "It ends—and may they continue the heritage…"

"Under the circumstances it is more charitable to leave that out." said Uncle Pousant.

Mother wearily collected the glasses and put them back on the tray. "There's only one thing left to do," she said. "Someone must tell Marta-mama." She looked at Hadji.

"I shall go. In the morning," Hadji said.

Hadji picked me up at the house the next morning after breakfast. Saturday was ordinarily our morning for visiting Marta-mama, who never left her apartment. Boghos and my mother would go on Monday to pay the rent and deliver the week's groceries. This morning, Hadji was dressed in the handmade brown monk's cloth garment that fell loosely about her 200 pound frame and hung almost to her ankles. She had three others, in black, navy and grey, and when one wore out she replaced it with another exactly like it. One could not imagine Hadji wearing anything else. Over her arm Hadji carried the large wicker basket filled with jars of pistachio nuts and lochum candy; cheese, dates and apricots which

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Marta-mama would munch on all week as she sat by the window.

We started out walking east across Lexington Avenue, past the armory where the morning's crop of unemployed had already begun to gather for the noonday Salvation Army soup; passing the life-size wooden horse outside the livery supply store on 24th Street. The crippled beggar who indecently exposed his stumps was seated on the sidewalk in front of O'Toole's Bar and Grill, as usual, and as she usually did, Hadji stopped for a moment to greet the sculptor who sold religious art on the corner of Third Avenue. His name was Khutumian, which means Christmas Eve, and I thought how appropriate it was at the proper time, but how out of season he must feel during the rest of the year. He complained that "they"—I wondered who they might be—were murdering his art, his talents, his ambition.

"Have some Halva," he said to me, extending a greasy box which had been lying between two crucifixes. "The artistic taste of the masses has reached abysmal depths," he said. "What's new?" Hadji said that Levon Dai had become engaged. To an American.

"Levon Dai always was an eccentric," said Khutumian. "It was to be expected." Hadji explained that we were on our way to break the news to Marta-mama and Khutumian shook his head slowly from side to side. "Christ is Risen," he said at last. It was the traditional Armenian Easter greeting.

We continued down 24th Street under the elevated tracks, past the open markets between second and third. Hadji stopped to talk to the German lady who sold fish. "Christ is Risen," said Hadji.

"So He has," said the German lady. "Any fish today?"

"Pousant coming, little fish, big fish," said Hadji. "Keep kuluks."

"I *know* he wants the heads," said the German lady, "smelts, bass, right?"

"Good," said Hadji, and we continued down the street.

On the corner of Second Avenue we ran into Parseghian, the undertaker. "Christ is Risen," he said, tipping his hat.

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"May his spirit be with you," said Hadji.

"And with you," said Parseghian. "Take my greetings to Marta-mama," he said. "I have not had the chance to visit her for two weeks, but tell her I will come in a few days."

"We are taking her some tidings," said Hadji. "Levon Dai has written of his engagement to an odar."

"The Lord give you strength!" said Parseghian. "You are serious?"

"It was in the newspapers," said Hadji. "He sent the papers."

"We are living in a sad world," said Parseghian, "but what can you do? I am on my way now to the Chinaman."

"May God rest his soul," said Hadji. "It was to be expected." We walked together to Marta-mama's apartment. She lived on Second Avenue, over the chinese laundry. Hadji crossed herself as we passed the laundry entrance, to the right of the stairs. The Chinaman would still be there, in his small room behind the ironing board no doubt, or could he have fallen dead in the shop itself, while handing a bundle of laundry to a customer! I closed my eyes as we passed. On the left of the stairway was the opaque glass door with the sign "Society for the Prevention of Capital Punishment." The door was closed on Saturdays, but on Monday morning the stiff-looking lady with the bleached blond hair would be back, pecking at the typewriter. What did you do to prevent capital punishment I wondered. I had asked Kelesh one day what capital punishment meant.

"Killing," said Kelesh. "But they are wasting their time." How strange, I thought, to waste one's time sitting at the typewriter all week long, to prevent something that was already against the law.

Marta-mama lived on the second landing and we entered without knocking because she would not have heard anyway. She was sitting by the window crocheting a border on a multi-colored wool spread. I recognized three of my old sweaters woven into the squares. Marta-mama's sinewy fingers worked quickly while she kept her face turned toward the window. She would never admit that she could not see.

"Marta!" shouted Hadji as she placed the basket on the

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table by the door. I waited to be sure that Marta-mama had heard before going up to her. 'When you are ninety-seven,' my mother had said, 'any little shock can stop your heart from beating.' That had been two years before, when no-one thought Marta-mama would recover from her stroke. Marta-mama put on her glasses, though we never saw that they helped her vision.

"Hadji?" she peered through the lenses. Her hair was still jet black, and from a distance, when one could not see the network of fine lines, her face looked half her age. "I thought so, I thought so, I saw you coming." she said. "Yavrum!" as I touched her arm. "Take off your coat, you are not going to run out quickly. I have waited all week for you." I was not wearing a coat, but I sat on the arm of her chair. "Let me see what I have for you today. Ah, I know. Close your eyes." I closed them. "Here!" she handed me a pomegranate. "You see? I saved one for you, I know how you like them."

Marta-mama's room was small, but it was pleasantly cluttered. When you opened the door of the corner cabinet postcards and pictures fell out in heaps; pictures mostly of Levon Dai at various ages. There was a water pipe which had once belonged to Marta-mama's husband, and it sat beside his fez next to the large tinted photograph of Levon Dai. There was a victrola of 1917 vintage, and on this was a box filled wich every size and color of rag imaginable.

While Hadji unpacked the basket Marta-mama pleaded that she would just complete the border on the spread. Levon Dai would no doubt be coming for Easter, and she wanted him to have it to take back with him. Hadji handed her a dish of pistachio nuts and she took one, opened it, and began munching on her bare gums.

"I am getting old," said Marta-mama.

"Nonsense!" shouted Hadji.

"I am, I am," said Marta-mama. "Ten years ago I would have finished this spread in a week. Do you know that this has taken me three months? But I do not begrudge the time. At Christmas I made a pact with myself to work the spread until Levon Dai arrives. It will be finished just in time. Old

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age, Hadji, is no more than a prolonged period of waiting. It is better when one does not wait idly." She crocheted silently for a moment. "Did you hear the excitement downstairs?" she said, "The poor man went last night. I could see from here he looked poorly yesterday. Poor fellow, he could not have been more than seventy." Marta-mama put down her work and took out a cigarette from a pack in her lap. "At seventy, I was riding horseback from Aintab to Kessab," she said as she groped for some matches.

"Didn't they have trains?" I asked.

"Trains!" exclaimed Marta-mama, "who would have believed such things could exist! One had to be rich even to own a horse, otherwise you walked." She shook her finger in my face, "Do not believe them," she told me, "when they say that the olden days were better. People who speak like that have no memories. Think of your Levon Dai—he has a factory, he has machines—in one hour he can do what would have taken five men a day. Only empty-heads wish for the olden days. Well?" she added, looking at Hadji, "have you a letter? You are not saying anything." Hadji drew the letter out of her pocket.

"And you did not say anything. Vayreni!" said Martamama.

Hadji took the letter out of the envelope. "He says he is busier than he has ever been before," she said, pretending to read. Marta-mama sighed. "I understand," she said, "he cannot come."

"Perhaps in the summer," said Hadji. "They are not so busy then."

"Perhaps," said Marta-mama. "What else does he say?"

"The check came," Hadji said, stalling. "Boghos and Maryam will bring the money Monday."

"He always sends too much money," said Marta-mama. "What does he think I will do with so much money. Buy ball dresses? Give a banquet? What else does he say."

"He says he is getting lonely there. He is thinking that he is not getting younger. He thinks perhaps he ought to be looking for a wife."

"About time!" said Marta-mama. "He was thirty-six years

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old last December. Why shouldn't he come to look for a wife? Does he say when he is coming?"

"He says he has met some very nice ladies right where he is. One, especially, he says, is a real dandigin. He sends you her picture to see how you like her." Hadji handed the picture to Marta-mama who studied it carefully through her glasses.

"Eh? it's hard to tell from a picture." Marta-mama said at last. "Does she look bright enough to you?"

"Very intelligent," said Hadji.

"Nice deep dark eyes, hasn't she?" asked Marta-mama.

"It looks that way."

"What did you say her name was?"

"Shirlan Edemus."

"Edemus—Greek name, isn't it?"

"It must be," said Hadji, avoiding my eyes.

"Eh," said Marta-mama, "we cannot be old-fashioned about these things. The Greeks are fine people. They cook much the same way we do."

Hadji looked relieved. "Parseghian is coming to see you next week," she said. "He sent parevs; we saw him downstairs." Marta-mama had not heard. She had stopped crocheting when Hadji produced the letter. She began now to unravel slowly and deliberately the border of the spread, winding the wool around her fingers.

"What are you doing...?" I started to shout, but Marta-mama did not hear, and Hadji waved at me to be silent.

"It will take me a week to undo the colors," Marta-mama said at last, and she seemed to be talking to herself, "and three more months to make it up again. That will bring us to July. After that," she said, "I cannot have much longer to wait, I suppose, one way or another."

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ON THEIR ROUNDNESS

His kind decree: we should not cut ourselves
Upon sharp edges;
So, when that parent rib was fleshed,
He plied it smooth as soap,
Lent to their nooks, plateaus and ledges,
Apertures and dainty ridges
A bevel and a cope.

Shaping divine solicitude!
How like a glacial interval it flowed
Across the heartland of his plan
To contour it for man;
And with what rare variety
Each migratory hand that wanders there
May see.

Not fluted goblet blown to tease the palm,
Not flared decanter plumped with amber wine
Is arced so intricately fine,
Nor is the white sail bellied to the breeze
Till canvas like an egret crests the air
So quick to please.

Or again, compare
The chipmunk's cheeks that bulge with hoard,
The juggler's dazzling speres, the rungs of trees,
The lasso's loop, the hoops round barreled beer,
The honeydew, the fireball at the fair:
Not one is so inimitably globed,
So tubed and ovaled, pendanted and furled

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Where even their seashell ears are lobed.

All other roundnesses decrease.
The canon turns its round in time, not space;
The braggard gun
Discharges its with loud report,
But then is done;
The round that dominates the ring
Is filled with flexion, bunched with pummelling,
But ends upon a bell.
Their roundness is perpetual.

Thus it is the painter's eye
That sifts beyond mortality
Has always found them good.
Rubens, the Fleming, saw them hugely,
Stuffed his palette as he stuffed his paunch with food,
Sought out and magnified each smallest curve
Until the postures of their naked verve
Broke them intact from all upholstered myth

Or, in peasant costume, burst their kirtle stays.
It took an Ingres to sober down our gaze
With stringent line and tones like river mist;

And then at Cagnes the old Renoir
Strapped brush to his pain-stiffened wrist
In a garden, where of his craft
And innocence he made a last frontier,
Dabbing, probing, that he might lose no way
To keep their roundness pagan, fresh, exemplary and gay.

—ROLF FJELDE

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OSKAR

Vienna at the turn of the century was a feverish capital, the seat of the now unimaginable Hapsburg Empire which incorporated one-eighth of the population of Europe, "a meeting-place of Teuton and Slav." This melting pot was an intensely creative intellectual center. Unfortunately, by the time-lag that usually occurs in the translation of foreign works into English, many of the writers are but names to us: Peter Altenberg, the most typical Viennese poet yet the most individual; the brilliant architect and theorist Adolf Loos; Karl Kraus, last of the great Viennese critics and editor of his own review The Torch *as well as author of satirical poems and plays. Hugo von Hofmannsthal, who invented a whole lyric world – at once Baroque, ironic, visionary – is known in the West at least for his libretti for Richard Strauss; while Arthur Schnitzler, author of* Anatol *and* La Ronde *is not completely unfamiliar. The musical names resound more comfortably: Hugo Wolf, Gustav Mahler, Arnold Schoenberg; while all the world knows of the solemn bearded young Doctor Siegmund Freud and of the unknown, unemployed painter who peddled his pallid water-colors in the street and later, much later, became famous as Adolf Hitler.*

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KOKOSCHKA

Oskar Kokoschka (born of a family of goldsmiths in 1886, at Pochlarn on the Danube) came to this exciting atmosphere with all the bright curiosity of his youth and artistic bent, studied at the Arts and Crafts School from 1904, in 1908 showed his first pictures, published his first book, and shortly after created a stir with an expressionistic play. Visits to Munich and Berlin followed, and in the famous Café Megalomania *in the latter city Kokoschka met Herwath Walden, editor of* Der Sturm, *who immediately engaged him to supply a weekly drawing of the personalities, mostly literary, of the times. Kokoschka worked steadily through 1910 and most of 1911 at these portrait sketches, from which the ones in these pages are selected to give the range of his style: from the nervous probing of the Schücking drawing through the casual ease of the Loos portrait to the bold brushstrokes of the head of Blümner.*

A lifetime of work has resulted in scores of superb paintings from the brush of Kokoschka, who, though universally acknowledged by historians and critics as one of the major twentieth century painters, remains not as well known as he should be in France, England, and America. Sir Herbert Read attributes this neglect to the "relentless realism" of his canvases, but goes on to note: "In Kokoschka love is instinctive identity; identity with the colour of the flower, the iridescences of fish scales and shells, the fluctuation of light over hills, or its splendour as it strikes the massed roof of some city... There is no pride in such love, no judgement. The flayed carcass belongs to the same order of existence as the flower... His portraits reveal the mute suffering of the individual, of the person crucified on the codes of false social values...".

As busy as ever today, Kokoschka publishes two books this season: a study of the Norwegian painter Munch, and a volume of essays. For the last three years he has maintained a Summer Academy in Salzburg where he delights his classes with unexpected exhortations from St. Thomas Aquinas and Comenius, and aphoristic advice like, "Work from the strangeness of the object toward the eternal... Work on your picture like a hummingbird... paint with a scalpel, not a fan... color is the grammar of painting, and like all good grammar is hidden... in watercolor don't tell everything you know, don't chatter or gossip." —E. W.

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Above: Levin Ludwig Schucking, philologist, professor, writer on Shakespeare. Opposite: Adolf Loos, most important influence of Kokoschka's younger days. An incredibly brilliant architect who built houses in 1900 that can still pass for new, he was active in the fields of typography, handwriting reform, fashion, furniture, ceramics, the fine

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arts. His essay, Ornament and Crime *is still meaningful today, and was combustive for Le Corbusier and Gropius. Among the contributors to a volume honoring his sixtieth birthday in 1930 were many who owed their first fame to him, or whom he aided or inspired: Alban Berg, Maurice Maeterlinck, Tristan Tzara, Marcel Ray, among others.*

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Above: the poet Richard Dehmel. Opposite page, above: Herwath Walden, "artist, prophet, businessman", founder-editor of Der Sturm, *and introducer of modern French art into Germany. A familiar cafe figure in Berlin, he disappeared as Hitler was coming into power.*

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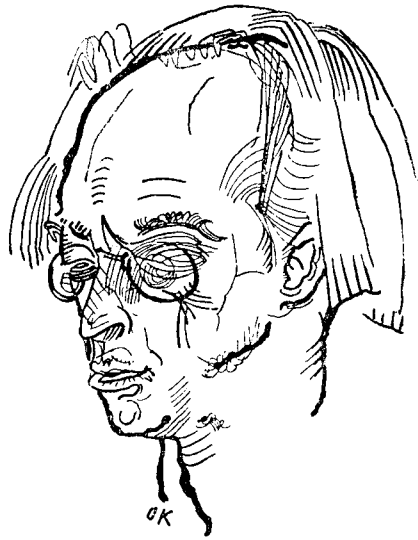

Below: Rudolf Blumner, the artist's youthful friend and companion. The two young men invented an imaginary friend named Virginia and spent hours dramatizing the fantasy, as a relief from the tedium of their penniless condition.

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IN WIDDERSHIN

I who was born to believe in the power of law
was maquis at heart.
I who wrote that a tapestry stretched to the moon
Needled with dancing of women more beautiful
than ever they were
lied in my words.
I who saw first the image and after the man,
Heard in the tune, not the whole, but the words,
Not the fact of the song but the incident glee
slept with the corpse
of my brother Cain,
and dreamt his doom.
I am not clear in this widdershin yet or will be
at my death,
though the world adore
the absence of fact
Unless my tune shrive me and itself
On the tongue in the mouth of a tapestried serf.

—CHRISTOPHER LOGUE

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GERARD-KORNELIS VAN HET REVE

GOSSAMER

AFTER GEORGE had gone off into the alcove, Mana stayed in the living room for another hour before she could bring herself to go to bed. She was too tired to do anything, and remained sitting at the table, staring in front of her. The light in the alcove stayed on all the time although she thought she had heard George getting into bed. Towards midnight she went to bed, too. But in spite of her tiredness she could not fall asleep. Her bedroom was at the front of the house, between the alcove and the shop. From her bed, she could see the slit of light between the threshold and the door, and she knew that the lamp in the alcove was still on. She asked herself if perhaps he had forgotten to turn it off. But, listening carefully, she heard a faint rustle of paper, and she knew that he was reading. It seemed as though she could not sleep as long as his light was on. She listened to the creaking of his bed and the occasional striking of a match, and she concluded that he was smoking in bed.

At half past one the light in the alcove went out, and she thought he had gone to sleep. But suddenly the door opened and he entered her room. His entrance made her start and she sat upright, her heart pounding. He asked for a coin for the meter and then she realized that the current had run out and that it was this which had interrupted his reading. She gave him the coin; he went to insert it, and the light came on again. She waited for another half hour before he turned the lamp off and went to sleep. But even then she remained awake. When she put her head high upon the pillow, she could look through the glass peephole through which one could see who

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was in the shop. She saw that the display was faintly lit by the street lamp in front of the house. The lenses and the metal parts of the cameras in the show window gave a bluish shine, and the framed portraits and enlargements on the shelves reflected a little light as well.

At last she began to doze, her head sinking deep into the pillow. She began dreaming. In her dream she saw a big ship covered with photographs of faces all nailed along its stern. As the ship sailed away she saw that the faces began to fade and melt into the water, the eyes turning wide and hollow and the mouths growing into large black holes. She tried to scream but she could not. She woke up with a start. Around her all was quiet. She asked herself why she had dreamed of a ship because no one she knew was at sea. Then she heard a far-off train whistle and she told herself that it must have been the sound of the train which had penetrated her sleep.

She lay awake again, thinking. The next day was Sunday and the shop was closed. She knew Oswald would not be back until the end of the afternoon. She could sleep her fill if she wanted. George would not get up early. She resolved, though, that she herself would not sleep late because she wanted George to go see her sister during the course of the morning. "He must go," she said to herself. "They said he could come and see them. They'll talk with him." Her sister lived in a northwestern suburb and it would take George a considerable time to get there. "Hilly will help him," she thought. Then she was overcome by sleep. But several times during the rest of the night she moved, and rolled her head, mumbling.

When she woke up, the alarm clock on the floor pointed to a quarter of ten. It was still dark in the bedroom because it had no windows and the peephole let through only a small amount of light. It was cold in the room, and there was a smell of moisture. She dressed quickly and, taking care to make no noise, she went through the corridor to the living room. She checked the stove, and was relieved when she found it still burning. For the last two weeks the weather had been rainy, and it was colder than usual for the time of the year. It was the second Sunday in October.

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The living room, although not as dark as her bedroom, was still shrouded in half-dusk. Its window looked out upon a high blind wall which was no more than sixteen feet away. The space in between was a yard paved with bricks. Immediately to the left stood the buildings of the next street, because the house was the next to the last at the corner, and on the right the yard ended against a high fence of corrugated iron. One could see the sky only if one flattened oneself against the window, or if one stepped outside upon a decayed wooden balcony which was a few feet above the level of the yard. Only grey, subdued daylight could penetrate the room and so a lamp had to be lit all day long.

Mana entered the room as cautiously as she had passed through the corridor. When she had turned on the lamp, she stood still and listened. The living room was separated from the alcove by only a curtain. All was quiet. If she let George sleep on for a while she could write a letter, she thought. She wanted him to take a letter with him for her sister.

She looked in a drawer of the sideboard where his schoolbooks lay and tore out a blank page from an exercise book. Sitting down at the table, she began writing quickly with a copy pencil.

Dear Hilly she wrote. *I want George to go today so he is coming to see you. You must talk to him. I'll take him to the streetcar to the stop where the streetcar leaves. I am alone Oswald has gone fishing he will be back in the afternoon. I put the fish in the paper they are fried. You like them so much. I told George about the boy, the boy who bought the books himself. You must ask Carl also to talk with him. I wanted to ask you can't Carl go to the school and ask again if he can go there again. They said no but Carl can go there they know him. He can talk with them. You must ask Carl.*

She stopped and thought. Where Hilly lived was almost outside the city, and the trip would thus take more than an hour. Hilly had been living there for a number of years with Carl, who was a schoolteacher, but they were not married. "He must go there before twelve," Mana thought.

It is dark here we are getting on to the winter, she continued.

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Do be careful when it gets cold Hilly. It isn't cold here but everything is damp. When he goes I give him the letter. It's always dark but then I think I'll scrub all the things in the room. John says that will also help.

She stopped and looked around. "I could do it today," she thought. For several months she had been thinking that there would be more light in the room if the furniture were a lighter color. All the furniture was stained black except for the piano which was a faded brown. Her plan was to scrub the furniture with hot water and ammonia, using a hard brush. This was not an idea of her own; her brother John had advised her to do it. He earned his living by papering rooms, laying linoleum and sometimes by upholstering furniture although he was not qualified in any of these trades.

She believed that the letter was sufficiently long, so she folded it up and put it under her dress. She thought that if John came during the afternoon he could help. He frequently visited her on Sunday afternoons. She remembered that he had especially mentioned ammonia, and that she had gone immediately to buy a whole bottle. He had told her, however, that he could not guarantee any results. "Mana, it is a very old house," he had said. But she was sure that with brighter furniture it would be sufficiently light in the room that the lamp could stay switched off even on sunless days.

Her urge to put her plan into effect became so strong that she decided to begin right away. This meant that all the furniture had first to be emptied. She got up and began to clean out the sideboard and to stack the contents in the corner in front of the alcove curtain. When she had finished this, she stopped and listened. A chair shifted in the alcove. She went to the curtain. The lamp in the alcove was switched on.

"Are you up, Rabbit?" she asked gently. She looked at the floor. She was sure she had not made a noise. "I tried not to make a noise," she murmured to herself. When she touched the curtain with her right hand, she noticed that her wrist began to ache. Whenever she did any work, her wrist began to swell and the joint became stiff.

There was a stumbling sound again. "Where are my

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cigarettes?" George asked in a loud tone. She heard him get out of the bed.

"I haven't seen them," she said, fumbling at a fold of the curtain. Suddenly the curtain was snatched from her hand as he opened it with a jerk. "But I'll look for them," she quickly added, looking up at his pale, sleepy face. He stood in the opening of the curtain in his underwear and shoes, and began to scratch his freckled shoulders and back as he peered into the room. He was much taller than his mother. Although he was not yet nineteen he had a bulging stomach, but his filled, pink neck and his fat, soft hands made his appearance somehow that of a baby.

"It's cold," he complained as he yawned and crossed his arms over his chest. He licked his large lips that were dry with sleep.

"The stove's going," she said. "Shall I stoke it up?" She studied his face as he came in the room, but he did not answer and went to the kitchen, leaving the door of the corridor open. She closed it and hurried into the alcove. A dim bulb in an imitation alabaster bowl which hung from the ceiling by three cords, lit only the area of the bed sufficiently. She looked on the bed, under it, on the night table and the chair, and she also felt in his trouser pockets, but there were no cigarettes. When she heard him close the tap in the kitchen she went quickly back to the room and sat down at the table.

"I think you smoked all your cigarettes," she said when he returned.

"I know who took them," he said. His face was not entirely dry and drops of water ran into his eyes. He shut the door of the corridor with a kick and went toward the alcove. When he closed the curtain Mana thought for a moment that perhaps he was going back to bed, but then she heard him put on his clothes.

"You must go to Aunt Hilly this morning," she said. Her voice sounded strange to her, as if someone standing beside her had spoken. Then she added louder, "I'll make your bed. You can leave it as it is." There was no answer. She knew very well that he never made his own bed, although he had

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enough time for it, because since July he had stayed at home. He usually got up late, and read and smoked either in the alcove or at the table in the living room till late in the afternoon, when he went to a cinema.

"Where did you put my cigarettes?" he asked from behind the curtain. She shook her head. Her wrist still ached, the pain having slightly increased. She studied the swollen part, holding her arm up against the lamp as though it were possible to look through the skin. "It always hurts," she thought. "I must always work."

"If they want a cigarette, they can ask for it," George said loudly, entering the room again. He had on a black uniform of a ship's engineer. The uniform was not yet four months old, but it was already badly wrinkled and full of grease stains.

"I think I have some cigarettes," Mana said. She tried to remember where, but then she shook her head. "No, I must keep them," she said. "They're for Uncle John when he comes. He'll help me."

George looked slowly round the room, and his eyes rested on the objects which were stacked on the floor.

"You could go and buy cigarettes in the cafe, if you want," she said quickly, watching him as he fastened his black, grease-soiled tie while he held under his arm his cap which had a ship's propeller embroidered on it in gold.

"What's that for?" George asked. "What're you doing?"

"I want brighter furniture," she answered. "It's all going to be scrubbed. I don't want to sit in the dark any more."

"You're crazy," he muttered. An annoyed look came over his face which was still ruddy from washing.

"Uncle John knows everything about how to make a room brighter," Mana said. "He's dealt with hundreds of rooms. Maybe a thousand, even. Every room is a problem, he says. Because every room is different."

"They could make you believe anything," he said, raising his voice, "because you're dense. Where do you think the light comes from? Does it come out of the table and the chairs? Or does it come in through the window? You think you'll

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get more light. But you won't get any more light, because the window's just the same window. Can't you see that?"

"The walls'll be made brighter, too," she said. "I'm going to buy brighter wall paper."

"He wants to sell his wall paper," George said slowly. The muscles of his neck became taut. "He wants money, that's all. And he tells you there'll be more light if only you just buy paper from him. And you're stupid enough to believe it."

"Uncle John doesn't want any money," she said. "We've only got to pay what the paper costs him. He'll do it all for nothing. We've only got to pay for the paper and the glue."

George breathed in, his teeth clenched together. He looked around until he saw a green ginger pot standing on the floor, amidst the stacked objects and drawers.

"If this is a room," he began, taking up the pot and putting it on the table. "If this is a room!" he repeated, half shouting. "Now listen! This pot is a room, and here is the window." He pointed at the opening. "Is that clear?"

His mother followed his movements, bending her plump, short body forwards across the table so that her narrow dress dug in the flesh of her shoulders and back.

"Here is the window," he said again, tapping against the pot. "Somebody lives inside. It doesn't matter who it is. It's only an example. Can you see that?" She nodded almost imperceptibly, trying to understand what it was he wanted to prove. "It can be an animal," he continued. "Or a bird. Now that animal thinks it is too dark in there. So he thinks I'm going to make the walls brighter. The walls, that's inside the pot. He thinks I'll paint the walls white. But the window stays just as small as it was. This window"—he pointed again in the opening of the pot—"hasn't become any bigger. Now do you think that he'll get any more light if he paints the walls and everything white?"

"Uncle John didn't say anything about painting," she said, shaking her head.

"Hell!" he shouted. He seized the pot with a wild gesture to put it back on the floor, but his fingers slipped on the smooth surface.

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"Watch out!" she cried, throwing herself forwards to catch it. The pot hit the edge of the table, but she got hold of it before it dropped to the floor. A small fragment had broken off at the top. She picked it up and tried to fit it in its place.

"I've had it for ten years," she moaned. "I got it from Hilly. She brought it when I was ill. Full of pieces of ginger." She had told how she had received the pot several times before. "The lid isn't there any more," she sighed. She dropped the fragment cautiously inside and put it back on the floor. "I'll ask Uncle John if it can be glued on again," she said. She sat down and stared into the lamp with her small, tired eyes. "Maybe he can mend it again." She felt her wrist which was still painful.

"You must put everything back in its place," George said. He took an illustrated magazine from the mantelpiece and sat down. He put the cap of his uniform beside him on the table, and began to leaf through the pages.

"My wrist is aching again," his mother complained, lifting her arm and pressing the soreness with her thumb. "I can't lift all these heavy things." She looked at him, but he went on turning the pages without looking up.

"You shouldn't wear that ring," she said. "You'll get in an accident with it sooner or later. It's an awful thing. You shouldn't wear it. You must take it off."

He stopped turning the pages and looked at his hand. On his middle finger was a heavy brass curtain ring upon which stood a thick, oval knob of steel. He took the knob between his fingertips, pulled, and lifted it. It was hollow, and by separating it from the ring he uncovered a strip of razor blade that had been soldered fast to a grove in the ring. He looked at it and then put the knob back in place.

"I can buy you another ring, if you must have a ring," she said. "You must put this one away. You don't need such a dangerous thing. It can open when you're not thinking, and you can cut somebody." She made a movement with her hand across the table cloth to illustrate the risk. "It can happen in a streetcar, or a cinema," she continued. "Your hand falls

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against a chair, or a curtain, and when you look you've already torn it. Or there are coats in a corridor, and you pass through that corridor, and there isn't much space, and your hand brushes against the coats. How can I pay for them? I can't pay it if you tear up somebody's clothes."

"Who says that?" he shouted. "I've never torn up anybody's clothes! It's a lie!"

"I... I only meant you should be careful," she said softly. "If only you're careful. You won't hurt anything with it, will you, Rabbit?"

"Who's told you all these lies?" he asked, gasping.

"Nobody," she answered quickly. A frightened look came over her face.

"I'm not going to drag tables and chairs about," he said. "I'm not a servant. Everything must be put back."

"Nobody's said anything," she declared in an imploring tone. She watched his face as he started thumbing through the magazine, this time jerking so violently at the pages that several of them were torn loose. "I don't want you to get in an accident," she went on. "I've got lots of other rings. There're rings in that drawer. I'm sure. Just look in that drawer." She pointed to one of the drawers of the sideboard which stood on the floor.

"Where?" he asked. He knelt down and started scrabbling in the drawer with such vigor that some of the contents fell out. His mother squatted down at his side and collected whatever he discarded. He took a handful of buttons and old buckles and threw them up, almost in her face.

"Quiet, quiet," she sighed. "Be calm. There must be rings in here." He stopped looking through the drawer and stood up.

"I don't want your rings," he said.

"But there're nice rings," she persisted, turning over the accumulation of useless objects.

"I can't use them," he said. "Are they weapons? Can I defend myself with them, in a harbor, in the dark? How do you think I can fight if I go to a street in a foreign town where I never was before, and a man attacks me from behind?" He gave a kick against the drawer.

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"But you've never been to sea," she said, standing up, too. "You don't know if you'll ever sail."

"I must have something to fight with," he said with a trembling voice. He sat down at the table again. She saw that his face had relaxed.

"You must go to Aunt Hilly today," she said. "They know you're coming. You must go this morning."

"No," he said, looking into the magazine. "I'm not their gardener."

"You should write the letter," she persisted. "They'll help you with it. They want to help you. It has nothing to do with their garden." He shook his head, and slowly turned the pages.

"There's nothing to be done in the garden now," she assured him. "The summer's over. They only want to help you with the letter. They promised to help you."

"Nobody's got to write a letter for me," he said, leaning back in his chair. He caressed his carefully parted hair which was dulled by too frequent washings, and then smelled the palm of his hand.

"They won't write your letter," she said. "You can write every letter yourself, of course. But you can write it while you're there, and they'll help you. They can read the letter and tell you if there's something that is better to write, and you can write it. They're always ready to help."

George began to read a section in the magazine. Standing by his side, she could look down on his head and shoulders. The light of the lamp fell at such an angle that she suddenly saw that below the back of his hair, beyond the edge of it, there was a delicate fur of tiny silver hairs running down beneath his collar. "Always ready to help," she whispered. "They'll help you."

"I'm not going in this weather," he said. She went to the window as though she could judge from there what the weather was going to be like.

"I don't think it's going to rain," she said. "But you can put on your raincoat. Aunt Hilly said you should come in the morning. I told her you'd come." "If you could, and if you liked," she added quickly, looking at his face.

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"That means the cinema's on when I come back," he said. "I won't go to a cinema in their neighborhood. You know that damned well."

"You could take the streetcar!" she said, forcing her voice to cheerfulness. "It goes so quick! You can be back as early as you want." She looked at the clock on the mantelpiece and saw that it had stopped. She hurried to her bedroom and came back with the alarm clock. It indicated a quarter after ten. "You see there's plenty of time," she said. "They'll be glad when you come. I'll give you the fish for Aunt Hilly." The evening before she had fried a panful of smelts, and had wrapped them in greased paper.

"I'm hungry," he said.

"You want breakfast now?" she asked, hesitating.

"Yes, and quick," he ordered. "I'm going. I've only got five minutes."

"Yes, yes, in a minute," she said, her voice almost singing with joy. She hurried to the kitchen.

When she left the room, George went up to the mantelpiece and pushed two brass vases apart, in which were dried flowers. Behind the vases stood a small wooden box. He opened it and took out a new, unopened package of cigarettes. He put it in his pocket, rearranged the vases and then sat down. Only the sounds of frying, from the kitchen, could be heard. He looked round at the furniture, and saw that the sideboard was empty and that its doors were half open. "She'll have to put everything back," he thought. "She's taken it out herself, and she can put it back, too. All by herself." His eyes wandered along the old yellowed wall paper damaged at those places where his mother had pinned dried toadstools or pieces of tree bark to the walls, or hung little vases by means of thin iron hooks pricked through the paper. Most of the vases were filled with sea shells, or colored stones; in the others were dried flowers. His mother loved nature. She had for many years been a member of a Friends Of Nature League, and had gone regularly on weekend trips which the league had organized. But that was a long time ago. Now she felt too tired at the end of the week, and it was also unwise to

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leave the shop when Oswald was not there. Besides she had noticed that it was mainly young people who joined the league's excursions. Gradually she had lost contact with the league, and now she was no longer a member. But she guarded the shells, stones, tree bark and dried toadstools and flowers like so many trophies. "I'm not a gardener," George thought. He turned his face away from the three glass vases with dried flowers which were fixed just above the sideboard.

His mother came in with a big tray in the middle of which stood a sizzling hot frying pan. She spread the big napkin she had brought with her on the table and put the tray down.

"What have you done?" he asked, pointing at the frying pan. There was an egg and a chop in it.

"Don't you like fried eggs and chops?" she asked.

"I'm not going to eat burnt stuff," he said.

"Burnt?" she asked, lifting part of the egg with a knife.

"I'm not going to eat it," he declared. "Who told you to make it this way?"

"I can make something else," she said softly. "I can eat it. You don't have to eat it if you don't like it. I thought you liked it. You always liked eggs and chops."

"Not if they're fried in old rotten fat," he said. "But that's too difficult for you to remember, isn't it?"

"You always liked it," she repeated, looking down into the pan.

"Not if you fry them at the same time," he said. "You know that. I told you. I told you that you must first fry the chops, and then you put the eggs in the pan, in the middle. This egg's burnt. It's bitter as hell, and you know it. And this fat is old fat, out of a pan somewhere."

"It's fresh dripping, from a new package!" she cried.

"I told you to fry them in butter," he snarled at her. "It's not the first time I told you that."

"I'll put them on a plate, in the kitchen," she whispered. "I can eat them. I'll make some others for you." She took up the pan and left for the kitchen.

"Don't try and fool me!" he called after her. "Don't try to use fat and tell me it's butter. I don't like those kind of tricks."

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The greasy smoke from the pan had climbed to the ceiling and now began to drift along the walls. He followed the lines with his eyes until they had disappeared. Then his attention was again drawn by the glass vases above the sideboard, and he went up to them. In one of them was some dried bell heather which was many years old. He took out the whole bundle in one grip and crushed it in his hand so that a soft rain of crumbled blossoms fell to the floor. "Don't you dare call me a gardener," he mumbled. He dropped the remains of the heather by little bits at a time, and as the last fell from his hand, his mother came in again with the frying pan.

"Why did you do that?" she called out plaintively. With the pan still in one hand, she bent over and tried to pick up what was left of the heather, but then she saw it was mashed into crumbs. "I brought it back from an excursion," she said with a trembling voice. "With Hilly. I can't go and pick heather any more."

"It stinks," he said, rubbing the heather under his foot. "It's full of insects."

She sighed and put the pan on the tray. He came to the table and looked in the pan, but he did not sit down.

"It's butter," she said. "It's all butter."

He shook his head. "I have no time to eat," he said. "I must go."

"But it's butter!" she repeated.

"It's too late now," he said. "I can't wait any longer."

"I cleaned the pan," she said in a faltering voice. "It's only butter now."

"No!" he shouted. "I can't wait!" He pushed her aside and disappeared into the corridor.

"Your coat!" she called, but he was already halfway through the corridor. She ran out of the room and in the semi-darkness groped amid the coats on the hall tree. "Rabbit!" she called. She thought she heard a streetcar in the distance. She found his coat, but then she remembered the fried fish, and her letter. She dropped the coat, ran into the kitchen and came back with a paper shopping bag. With shaking hands she took out the parcel of greased paper, opened

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it, put the letter inside, closed it, and dropped it back into the bag. She heard George close the street door. Then she picked up the coat and began to run. She had forgotten that on Sundays the street door was always locked and could only be opened with a key. As she drew it out from under her dress she felt herself sweating heavily. When she finally stood outside she saw a streetcar turning the corner and passing out of sight. She tried to make out if George was on it, but she could not see. There was no one waiting at the stop. Nevertheless she ran toward it, half stumbling over the coat.

He was not at the stop. "Your coat," she mumbled, looking toward the entryways nearby. Then, suddenly, she saw him in the hall of the cinema which stood opposite. She wanted to call, but no words came, and she could only hold up the coat. Then she crossed the street, still holding the coat high because the street was covered with puddles of rain. The steel telescope gate of the cinema was partly opened. George was standing in front of the ticket window. As she approached the gate he saw her. She went up to the stone steps and held up the coat, but he motioned her to stay away.

"I'll wait here," she whispered. She saw him pay and put a ticket in his purse. Then he came down the steps slowly, without looking at her. At the bottom of the steps, still behind the gate, he stopped and began to study a board filled with photographs.

"Here's your coat," she said, speaking as loudly as she could, but she heard her voice sound thin. "Rabbit, you must put on your coat," she whispered, holding the coat up another time. For a moment she considered pushing it through one of the rhomb-shaped openings of the gate, but if he were not to take it, it would drop to the ground. He continued to examine the photographs. "I can't buy you a new uniform," she said somewhat louder. "You musn't get in the rain without a coat." It was not raining, but there were masses of low hanging clouds, and there was a cold wind.

George came outside the gate. "How dare you talk about clothes in the street?" he asked. "Are you mad?"

"I can't buy you a new uniform," she repeated. "I can't

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pay another three hundred guilders." She heard the next streetcar approaching in the distance.

"Where's the money for the cigarettes?" he asked. She quickly took out her purse and handed him some silver.

"That isn't enough," he said, taking it and putting it in a pocket of his jacket. "I need more."

"I haven't got any more change," she answered, opening her purse again and showing a folded note.

"Give me that," he said. The streetcar came round the corner.

"You don't need that much," she protested, taking the note out. He snatched it from her hand and began to cross the street. She followed him, and in her haste stepped into some water. She held out the paper shopping bag to him. "The fish. The fried fish for Aunt Hilly," she said. The streetcar began to slacken speed.

"Fish makes everything dirty," he said. "Do you want me to get my clothes dirty?"

"You can throw the bag away afterwards," she said above the noise of the streetcar. "You don't have to bring it back. You give the fish, and then you can throw the bag away." She pressed the handles of the bag against his hand, and he seized them. The streetcar stopped and he got on the rear platform of the second coach.

"Why don't you take your coat?" she called, holding it up a last time, but he went inside. There was no one else on the platform. She ran alongside the coach to the front to see if the conductor was there, but before she could reach it, the streetcar moved quickly away.

She crossed the street and then she discovered that she was on the wrong side. She stood in front of the cinema again. Suddenly she walked up the steps and went to the ticket window. The man behind it looked up at her through his glasses.

"George...," she said, stammering. "That boy..." she corrected herself. "He bought a ticket."

"Which boy?" the man asked impatiently. She looked behind her as though she were about to point at some one.

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People entered the hall and began forming a line behind her.

"In uniform... black uniform," she brought out. "Captain... sailor's uniform. Black!"

"Oh, that one," the man said, taking the receiver from a ringing telephone and holding his hand over the mouth piece. "Second house, quarter past three. Want a seat there, too?"

"No," she said in an imploring tone. She felt very warm and she was certain her dress must be soaked. She wanted to leave but instead she leaned against the window. "He forgot his coat," she said. "It's going to rain." She smiled and stepped back from the window, and nearly bumping into the people waiting behind her, she hurried down the steps.

After traveling three quarters of an hour, the streetcar began to approach the border of town. Most of the stops were deserted so that it passed them by without slackening its speed. The streetcar had been following the main streets to the northwest. As it continued, the houses grew lower and in between them lay spaces of waste land in which were large puddles of rain. The streetcar moved up the slope of a high viaduct which crossed over a railroad. On the farther side was a stop and George got off by himself. The neighborhood where Aunt Hilly lived was underneath alongside the railroad, and a concrete staircase for foot passengers led down to the street below. The streetcar moved off. He went down the steps as far as the first landing and leaned over the steel railing. There was a strong, cold wind. The sky was almost entirely overcast with grey clouds, but as yet it had not rained. Just above the horizon, however, darker and heavier clouds could be observed which were of a brownish, polluted color, but they seemed not to move, or else they moved so slowly that it could not be discerned from where he stood.

He looked out over the track and at the railroad yards and sheds in the distance. A freight train had just started away from the yards and was slowly drawing near. He ran farther to the left until he found a place just above where the train would pass. "Sweet train," he murmured. He held the paper bag outside the railing and let it dangle in the wind. The

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engine of the train passed underneath him. "Sweet little train is hungry," he said out loud, as he dropped the bag into the depths. He saw it turn round once in the air before it disappeared in a cloud of smoke. The next moment the wind blew the smoke in another direction, and he saw that the bag had landed on top of a coach and was taken along. Then the coach disappeared under the viaduct. He ran up the steps to see the bag reappear at the other side, but the smoke of the engine was too thick, and he was no longer able to distinguish which coach it was on. He felt cold and went down the steps, and began to follow the main street along the railroad. Like the sidestreets he passed, it was badly paved with coarse bricks. It was a neighborhood of small, detached old houses, most of them only one story high. They were in a neglected state, with scaled-off paint and often with cardboard-stopped windows. The streets were full of pits in which water of showers during the night had collected. Most gardens were used for growing potatoes and vegetables, and in many of them stood rabbit hutches. Some gardens, however, were not in use at all, and the rains had washed the thin layer of vegetable mould away and brought the sand under it to the surface, and the wind had blown the sand into the streets. "There's nothing growing in the gardens," George thought.

When he had passed several sidestreets he turned into a small street where the pavement was in somewhat better condition than that of the others. At the edges of either sidewalk young trees had been recently planted.

He stood still near the fourth house on his left. It was a small, square house not very different from the others around, of brown bricks and with a nondescript roof of grey tiles. It was equally old as the surrounding houses, and sagged slightly, but the walls had not long ago been cleaned, and the gutters, windowframes and other woodwork had recently been painted green.

He stopped when he found that a group of trees in an adjoining garden stood between him and the house, so that he could look at it without the risk of himself being seen.

The garden which surrounded the house consisted of a

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closely cut lawn. Round raised beds of earth had been saved out in which stood iris plants with shriveled, brown blossoms. There was a path of brown tiles leading to the front door. Around the garden, which impressed one as being fairly well-kept, there was a fence of thick steel poles with very neat iron-thread wickerwork between them. The fence showed no signs of corrosion. It seemed painted as recently as the woodwork of the house and was colored in the same dark green.

He saw that one of the front windows was open. "They shouldn't do that," he whispered. "Thieves can get in." He took a step nearer in order to look more closely, but there were lace curtains behind all the windows so that it was impossible to see inside.

When he got to the gate, he saw a boy of about twelve in faded blue overalls who appeared at the back of the adjoining garden. The boy crossed through the trees and sat down on the fence. He wore glasses, and carried a freshly cut branch with him, the bark of which had been peeled off. He cast a look at George and started beating on the fence. George crossed the lawn and rang the bell. The boy put the branch between his teeth and then, resting his weight on his hands, shifted his seat sideways along the fence until he was as near as possible to the door.

There was no answer, and George rang again. At the sound of the bell the boy struck several times with his stick against the fence. No one came to answer the door. George bent over and listened with his ear against the key hole but there was nothing to be heard inside. He went up to the boy.

"Are they in?" he asked. The boy shook his head.

"Can't you answer?" George asked. "You must stand up when I talk to you, boy." The boy remained sitting and only looked at George's cap. His glasses were set in a cheap iron frame which pressed deep into the skin of his nose and temples.

"That fence is pretty dirty," George said. "You'll make yourself dirty. You'd better get off. Come here." The boy climbed down from the fence, but he let himself down on the opposite side of it, where he stood and watched George attentively.

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"When do they come back?" George asked. "No lies, please."

"I don't know," the boy answered in a high, hoarse voice. One of his front teeth was missing, George now saw. "He likes fighting," he thought.

"You don't have to stay standing there," he said with a friendly voice. "You can come here. You can come into this garden. It's quite all right." He noticed that small particles of earth had stuck to the trouser legs of the boy's overalls. "I won't tell anybody that you've made your clothes dirty," he continued. "Of course I won't. We can clean them. There's water enough at the back of the house. Come on."

"Are you an airman?" the boy asked.

"That's right," George answered. "I'll tell you all about our planes, and the air fights, if you like. But first we must clean your clothes. Look how dirty you are. Come here." The boy climbed over the fence and came up to him, though with hesitation.

"Yes, pretty dirty," George said, scanning the boy up and down. "But it's not so bad. We must see if there's water over there, and a brush." He pointed at the house. "You know the way better than I, don't you? Let's go to the back garden." To his great surprise the boy followed him as he went alongside the house. They came around to the back. There was a lawn here, rolled just as neatly as at the front. In the middle there was a round island of tiles on which stood a garden table and two garden chairs, all slightly weathered and muddied with rain. They came to a small concrete pond next to the tiles.

"You see there's plenty of water," George said. There was nothing growing in the pond. He stood still and looked down upon the dark water. The boy remained at his side and George could see his lean face and the brushy, dull blond hair above it mirrored beside his own.

"You like stories about airmen, don't you?" he asked. "Now you've met an airman yourself. Isn't that funny?" He chuckled. "What would you like to be? An airman? Or do you want to become a gardener? Do you like to work in

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gardens?" "He knows that his clothes are dirty," he thought.

"I want to be an airman," the boy said.

"Right, right," George approved, smiling. He reflected. "This water's pretty clean," he continued. "We can clean your clothes with it." He looked around. Neither in the garden itself nor in the adjoining gardens was anyone to be seen. "I'll see if we can go inside," he said. "We need a brush." At the back there was only one door and a few small windows on either side of it. Behind them were the same kind of curtains as at the front of the house. He tried the door. It was not locked, and he went in. The door entered upon a small, square kitchen. Opposite the outer door was another door. He tried it, but it was locked. He knocked several times, but nothing was to be heard. When he turned around, he found that the boy had come to the open door and was looking inside.

Although the kitchen was small, it was very neat and clean. The walls had been freshly painted white. All the pans and other cooking untensils stood in precise rows on the shelves or hung in perfect order on white enameled hooks on the walls. There was nothing on the draining board and the white, wooden kitchen table was bare as well.

"Come in," George said, but the boy remained standing where he was. "You can come in. It's all right," George held on, but the boy did not move and only looked at him, leaning on his stick. "You can see there's plenty of water," George said, pointing at the tap. "Come in. It's cold." He looked down at the floor and waited. The wind lifted the thin lace curtain behind the door pane, and blew a small quantity of fine sand on the clean white tiles of the floor. "I'll make his clothes clean," George repeated to himself. "I'll make his clothes clean."

"I'm pretty sure there's a brush somewhere," he said. "You can help me look for it, if you like." He opened the cupboard and drew out the drawers under the draining board. The boy remained waiting at the door, watching his movements. George closed the cupboard and the drawers again and went to the window.

"We don't need a brush," he said, opening the curtain at

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the window slightly. "We can get your clothes clean without water, too. I can beat the dirt off." He looked out across the garden. "Nobody," he murmured. "Alone."

"You must eat something," he said, smiling at the boy. "You're hungry. I'll see if there's something to eat for you." He began to humm. Slowly going to the door, he sang softly, *I'll find it, I'll find it, Something to eat for you.* "When you are an airman, you must eat a lot," he said. "Way up in the sky it's so cold! We must eat almost every hour. We must always eat fish." He stopped. "Come on in!" he suddenly shouted.

"I mustn't go in the house," the boy said, taking a step back, with the stick under his arm.

"Who told you that?" George asked. "If I tell you to come in, you can come in. I'm the pilot." He lowered his voice. "My brothers were killed in a plane," he continued, staring dreamily past the boy, into the garden. "They were airmen. They went up thousands of feet, and then the plane caught on fire, and they crashed down." He shook his head pensively. "You'll understand that I don't like to talk about it." He seized the handle of the door. "Quick!" he said. "Hurry! Come in!" The boy only stepped farther back.

"Are you afraid?" George asked. The boy stood still again, watching him carefully. "He's a gardener," George thought. "I'll bury his clothes in the dirt, in a pit. There's dirt on his clothes."

"You're afraid you'll break something when you come inside, aren't you?" he asked. "You must throw that stick away." "Give it here,"he mumbled, suddenly throwing himself forward at the boy, but his grip missed. The boy jumped aside just in time and ran away to the garden he had come from, climbed the fence and remained standing on top of it, ready to jump down to the other side.

George went back into the kitchen and closed the door. From behind the curtain he could watch the boy, who now sat down on the fence, and kept his eyes fixed on the kitchen door all the time. "He's hungry," he said to himself. "He wants something to eat." He looked up at the sky. The dark, heavy clouds had climbed from the horizon and could be seen

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above the houses. "It's going to rain," he thought. He felt hungry and opened the cupboard again, but at first he found nothing but large tin boxes with flour, beans or yellow peas. Putting the boxes on the floor, he looked deep into the cupboard where there stood cans of fruit juice and vegetables. He threw them behind him on the floor. "I want fish," he mumbled. Finally he discovered two small cans of sausages, but although he looked everywhere there seemed not to be a can opener in the kitchen. He chose a heavy meat knife and stabbed a round hole in both the cans through which he pulled the sausages out with a fork. He finished the contents quickly and threw the cans on the floor. Then he studied the fork and the knife for a considerable time, shook his head and threw them down as well.

"I have a ring," he said out loud, going to the window again. The boy was still sitting on the fence, holding the stick between his knees. "The rain's coming," George thought. "Nobody stays outside. He must come in before it rains." He knocked at the window with his ring. The boy turned his head and looked, first at the house, and then around him. George took the knob from the ring and held the blade against the window pane, with one of the curtains in between. "He must come in," he whispered. "The rain's bad for his clothes." He moved his hand downwards slowly while pressing forcefully against the window. The glass gave off high little squeaks and the cloth of the curtain split with a snap. The boy came down from the fence and took up a position in front of it. George opened the door and slowly walked up to him. The boy threw his stick over the fence, but did not run away.

"It's going to rain," George said, stopping at a small distance from him. Between him and the boy there was a stretch of ground in which low shrubs were growing. "You must come in," he said loudly. He pointed at the kitchen, the door of which had been left open." If you keep walking round in the rain you'll catch a cold."

"I'm going home," the boy answered.

"But your clothes are still dirty," George said. "How can you go home with your clothes looking like that? We haven't

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done anything to make them clean." He looked around sharply, but there was no one in sight. He took one step forwards. The boy did not move. "What do you think they'll do to you when you get to school with dirty clothes?" George asked. "Don't you think you'll get punished?" The boy watched him tensely.

"You're going to be punished," George continued. "And I know something else about you. You've been telling lies. You've made holes in your clothes. You've torn them." The wind blew the kitchen door shut with a bang. At the sudden sound the boy took a step sideways. "No, come here," George said. He jumped forward through the shrubbery. The boy saw no chance to climb the fence now and began to run alongside it to the back of the garden. George tried to seize him but missed. "Come here," he gasped. "I'll punish you." The boy had a short start on him but George quickly caught up. He was about to seize his shoulder when the boy suddenly fell down as though he had been tripped. George stopped and threw himself upon him, but before he could a get sufficient grasp, the boy worked himself through an opening at the bottom of the fence. George felt the boy's leg slip through his hands but he held onto his foot. The boy began to yell. "Filthy gardener," George hissed. "Don't cry when you're punished." He tried to rest his knee on the boy's ankle, but with a violent jerk the boy drew in his leg, and the next moment George held only an empty shoe in his hands. The boy got up on the other side and ran away, crying loudly. George stood up and ran back along the fence, in the direction of the street. When he had passed the house and stood in the front garden he looked out on both sides, but there was no one in the street.

He put the shoe under his jacket. The crying of the boy could still be heard, but now he heard loud voices of other people from the same direction. Buttoning up his jacket he walked through the gate and entered the street. He walked quickly as far as the corner. When he had turned it he began to run. He ran towards the viaduct. Although he saw no one following him, he ran up the steps and when he saw that there was no streetcar coming he continued running in the

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direction of town until he found that a curve in the road hid him from sight. There he sat down on the sidewalk for a moment to catch his breath before beginning to walk along the highway back into town. A streetcar caught up with him but he hid behind a tree, and let it pass. When he saw another streetcar approaching he left the main road and followed a narrow street which was parallel. He had entered a neighborhood of factories and storehouses where there were few people walking about. He began to feel tired and looked around for a quiet spot to sit down. In the row of houses on either side there were several gaps made by ruins. The debris had been cleared away long ago and only the naked basements remained on which grew high weeds and even small trees. He did not want to sit down in any of them because they were muddy and littered with papers, empty bottles and other refuse people had thrown down in the course of years. "I need a drink," he thought.

Farther on in the street he came to a building which according to a decayed wooden board once had been a hotel. Now all the upper storeys had been destroyed and only the ground floor remained standing. In this there was a cafe. He went inside. It was dark and low and originally had consisted of two rooms which could be concluded from two differently stuccoed ceilings and a marking where the wall between them had been broken away. It was lit by a few small parchment lampshades fouled by flies. The counter was at the back, and a few customers were sitting or standing beside it. He did not join them, but sat down at one of the brown wooden tables by the window, and ordered a gin.

One of the customers went up to a big, outmoded record player which stood aginst a thick beam meant to support the roof in the middle of the cafe. George saw him insert a coin. The machine started playing, but the record was so worn that the words of the song could hardly be distinguished. *This Is The True True Sailor's Life* was the only line he caught.

The waiter brought his gin and he drank it in slow sips, staring at the lights in the record machine. "This is the cafe where the sailors come," he thought. He resolved to note down

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the house number of the cafe and the name of the street. "The captain comes here, too," he said to himself. "He orders them to get back on board the ship. The Sunday is over. I'll go back with them to the ship." He ordered another gin. As he sat staring at the record player he saw that a square object had been hung above it from a nail in the beam, but he could not make out what it was. He got up to have a look. It was a cheap tile of plaster on which the form of an airplane had been embossed. The plane stood with its nose driven into the ground, with a twisted propeller, and with broken tail and wings. It had been painted in red, white, and blue, with sticky paint which had collected the dust. Above the plane was inscribed in black relief letters, BROKEN WINGS, and under it, UNDYING GLORY. He touched the twisted propeller which had been painted white. "This is the plane of my brothers," he thought. "They paid their debt to the air."

The record had played itself out and the little red and orange lamps behind the pane switched alternatively off and on while a guilded metal hand, moved by a wheelchain, tremblingly carried the record away.

"The plane crashed down, and it was burned," he said to himself. "They were killed. The body of one of my brothers was brutally maimed. They found his shoe." He took the shoe from under his jacket and studied it in the red light of the record player till the machine came to a complete standstill, and the little lamps went out. He touched the tile again, moving his finger over the propeller of the plane. Then he looked cautiously around him but no one was paying attention.

The waiter brought his gin. He returned to his table and sat down, holding the shoe on his lap. He took a coin out of his purse and began to remove the earth from the sole of the shoe. When he had finished he drank up the gin, called the waiter and ordered another. As the waiter left, he stopped him.

"I should like to buy that tile, with the plane," he said, pointing at it. "How much is it?" He produced his purse and shook all his change into the shoe.

"I'm afraid it isn't for sale," the waiter said, casting a puzzled glance at the shoe.

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"Are you sure?" George asked, shifting the money from the heel to the toe.

"I'll ask, if you like," the waiter said.

"Yes, please, do try," George said. He sighed. "I want it so much," he murmured, but the waiter had already left. He looked outside as he waited, and dabbed his mouth with his handkerchief. Opposite the cafe there was an empty site like the many he had passed, and it was separated from the street by the remains of a wall, in which there were several large gaps.

The waiter brought his third gin. "We're sorry sir," he said. "But it isn't for sale. It's been hanging there for years and years. It's a gift, from a customer."

"I see," George said, lighting a cigarette and offering one to the waiter. "I wish I could buy a tile like that somewhere. When you've lost relatives that way..." He shook his head slowly. "Do you know where they sell them?"

"I really don't know," the waiter said. "In a shop, maybe."

"I've been looking in hundreds of shops," George said.

"No, I don't know," the waiter said, looking around as if he were called to another table. He left, but George called him back again.

"There's something else I want to ask you," he began. "You see this shoe?" He held the shoe up and made the change clink in it. "For you it's just a shoe, nothing more, isn't it?" The waiter did not answer and looked in front of him, already impatient. "But it means a great deal to me," George said solemnly. "This shoe mustn't be thrown away. If you knew the value it has for me! "I want to have it bronzed," he continued, lowering his voice. "They must bronze it for me, and I shall keep it in my study room." He looked up at the waiter, caressing the shoe with his fingertips, and sighed.

"I wouldn't know," the man said, and left. George put the shoe on the table and drank from his gin while he looked outside and tried to see what was in the plot behind the wall. "It isn't a garden," he thought. He saw a boy in a black cotton raincoat appear from the left, rolling a hoop. In front of the cafe, in the middle of the street, he stopped, went up the sidewalk on the other side and leaned against the wall. George bent

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nearer to the window and looked at the boy closely. "Why do they let him play with that hoop?" he asked himself. "All the dirt in the street gets on the hoop, and then it comes off on his clothes. It's stupid." He winked several times, but apparently the boy did not see him. "I must talk to you," he muttered, getting up. He called the waiter.

"I can't stay any longer," he explained. "I'm rather in a hurry." He shook the change from the shoe on the table, paid quickly and left, holding the shoe under his arm. When he stepped outside, the boy was still leaning against the wall. The hoop stood beside him.

George walked a short distance beyond the cafe, to the left, before he crossed the street. At his left, which was the direction he had come from, the street was deserted. In the other direction he could see only to where the street curved, but no one was there, either. He sauntered up to the boy.

"Give me that hoop, boy," he said. "You're getting your clothes dirty with it." He tried to seize the hoop, but the boy clutched it and stepped back. "You want to run away, don't you?" George asked. The boy stood near one of the gaps in the wall. "We'd better go through there," George said, pointing at it. "We can have a quiet talk there. Nobody can see us there." He showed the shoe. "You'd like to have it, wouldn't you?" he asked. "But first I must talk to you. We're going behind the wall. Come on." With a quick movement he went to stand before the boy, thus blocking his way of escape. "Do you work hard in school?" he asked. "They're giving you too much homework. Far too much for a boy of ten." He seized the hoop, but the boy did not let it go. George began to pull at it in the direction of the opening in the wall. "I must have a look at your clothes, too," he said. The shoe dropped from under his arm.

"It's my hoop!" the boy shouted. George looked around him, but as yet the street looked deserted.

"I must see if you've torn your clothes," he said. "Then I'll punish you." At these words he suddenly let the hoop go so that the boy fell. Before he could get up George grabbed him by the collar of his raincoat.

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"Father! Father!" the boy screamed.

"Your father is dead," George said. He began to pull the struggling boy towards the opening in the wall. The boy kicked at him, crying loudly, but George did not let go and dragged him on, trying to put his hand over the boy's mouth. "Get behind that wall," he brought out, gasping. "I'll punish you."

At this moment loud cries came from somewhere above. George looked up and saw that a window had been opened on the second storey of the house next to the cafe. The shouts came from a middle-aged man in sleeves and braces, who stood in the opening. George relaxed his grip and the boy jerked himself loose and ran to the house from where the man was shouting. Still crying, he began to bang desperately on the street door.

"What a noise," George mumbled. "Let them be quiet." He saw two men approaching from the far end of the street, but they seemed not yet to have noticed anything out of the ordinary. George picked up the hoop and broke it with such force that he wounded his thumb. Then he picked up the shoe and walked up to the house. As he approached, the boy began to beat harder at the door, and to cry even more loudly.

"Police!" the man in the window shouted. Heads appeared at some of the other windows of the house.

"I'll tell you something about this boy! George called back, but he felt so tired that he could not raise his voice sufficiently. "He's made his clothes dirty as hell!" he called, with a great effort to make his voice louder. "You pay God knows how much for his clothes and he gets them torn up in an hour!" The man let the window fall shut and George thought he saw him running to a door at the back of the room.

"Wait!" he called. "Listen!" Then, with all the force he could gather, he threw the shoe up at the window and started running to the left. He heard the breaking of the pane, but he ran on without looking back, and passed the curve in the street. Somewhere in the distance, the traffic noises of a larger street could be heard. He passed a second curve in the street and saw that the street was a dead end. Then he thought

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he heard footsteps and voices not very far behind. There was no way back, and he chose a narrow passage on his left. It was muddy and he had to jump over puddles. When the passage took a sharp angle to the right, he stood still for a moment to catch his breath. He looked back around the corner, but no one had yet entered the passage. Neverthless he ran on. The passage made another curve, this time to the left. When he got around it he saw that here was a dead end, too. There were voices and footsteps behind him. The footsteps were faint, but the voices echoed along the walls. *Uniform*, he could make out. *Polish. A Pole.* He ran to the end of the passage where there was a sort of tiny square, which probably made it possible for pushcarts to turn. Around it stood low, old storehouses, and he looked for an opening between. Only in one place there was a break between the buildings, but it was closed off by a high wooden gate. He looked to see if he could climb over, but there was barbed wire at the top. Suddenly he saw that there was considerable space between the bottom of the gate and the ground. He threw himself down and wrenched himself through, losing a button from his uniform. The footsteps reached the last corner.

He ran down a path leading to an open site where there lay hundreds of automobile tires, stacked into towers. The site was closed on two sides by buildings, but on the remaining side, at the left, there was a wall which was not very high. He headed for this. When he reached it he heard someone battering the wooden gate. The wall was too high to jump over, but two crates lay near it, and also a couple of tires. He stacked the tires upon each other, piled the crates on top, and from the upper crate, he jumped onto the wall. Two men came runing down the path. He recognized one as the man from the window, and he saw that he was still in his sleeves. He was heavily built and his face was red with exertion. The other one was thinner and younger. He wore a rubber raincoat and a dockworker's cap, and carried a part of a brick in his hand.

George bent over, seized the crate on top, and made the lower one topple over the tires. Then he lifted the upper crate above his head.

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"We've got you!" the fat man shouted. "Come here! We'll fire!"

"Bastards! Bastards!" George screamed. He swung the crate down at the men but missed. Then he ran along the top of the wall, looking for a place where he could jump down. At the other side there was a place where barrels and scrap iron were stored. He saw an upright barrel not too far from the wall, and jumped. He landed on the barrel with a bang so that the soles of his feet hurt, but he came down safely and ran on along a winding path among the barrels. The noise of the traffic had become very clear. The path widened into a gravel drive between two storehouses, and he suddenly saw that it led into a busy street, without a gate or any similar barrier between. His windpipe squeaked, but he ran on. The street was a main one, and at his left there was a big crossing. A streetcar moved away from the stop which was there and slowly turned towards him. He ran through the traffic and seized the bar of the rear platform. It was gaining speed and the passengers cried warningly, but he jumped, and two men pulled him inside. The platform was half full. He found a place in the middle and, kept his cap in his hand.

It was a considerable distance to the next stop and the streetcar covered it at full speed. The stop was an interchange station, and a large number of passengers got off. He joined them and crossed the road, keeping inside the crowd. He went into an entryway of a shop and looked around. At one of the corners there was a taxi stand. He walked close to the buildings and, only at the last moment, crossed the sidewalk to get in a taxi. He mentioned a street near his own.

"I've forgotten the number," he said to the driver. "But I'll tell you when you can drop me." He put his cap beside him on the back seat and leaned away from the rear window. He was still gasping for breath and his chest squeaked.

"On leave?" the driver asked. George offered him a cigarette.

"That's right," he answered. "But I don't live here. I have no relatives." They remained silent during the rest of the drive.

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"It's a cafe," George said when they drove into the street he had mentioned. "They're waiting for me there." He pointed at the first cafe and the taxi stopped. He paid quickly, gave a large tip, and went to the cafe window. There was no one inside, and when he went to the door he saw a board marked 'closed'. He waited in front of the board, hoping to hide it until he heard the taxi drive off. Then he went into an entryway next to the cafe and looked out onto the street. A few raindrops fell near him but it was generally dry. When he saw the taxi reach the corner of the next street he came out of the entryway to see it go out of sight, but it stopped just before the corner, turned, and came back. He jumped back. The taxi drew up slowly, driving close to the sidewalk while the driver looked out of the window. "He's got a radio," George thought. Behind him was a flight of stone steps leading down to the door of a basement flat. He went down the steps until his head was just above the level of the street. The taxi stopped. He saw the driver get out and go up to the cafe, and he heard him rattle the door. When he heard his footsteps move away he looked up cautiously and saw him get back in the car and drive on slowly alongside the sidewalk. Then the taxi crossed the street, turned, and passed by on the other side. It accelerated and disappeared from sight.

George came out of the entryway again and lit another cigarette.

"They only know that I had on a uniform," he thought. A few drops of rain fell again. He suddenly put his hand to his head and hair. "Hell," he muttered, and felt under his jacket. He looked round him on the sidewalk and then ran to the entryway. He looked down the steps, too, but his cap was not there, either.

When he got near the shop he looked around to see if there was anyone who might be watching him, but there was no one. "I've got to take off my uniform," he thought. He looked in through the show window, but there was no one in the shop. He took out his key but then changed his mind and rang the bell, taking a position beside the door so that he could see

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who came to answer, without being seen himself. His mother came hurrying through the corridor and opened the door.

"I thought it was Uncle John," she said.

"Anybody come to see me?" he asked, watching the entrance of the corridor.

"No," she answered with a sigh. "Uncle John hasn't come yet." She looked puzzled as he stood hesitating in front of the door. "Didn't you have your key with you?" she asked.

"My hands are too cold," he answered, coming in.

"Yes, it's too cold to be without a coat," she said, quickly closing the door. "The stove's very hot. You'll be warm in a minute." He followed her inside.

"I wish I knew if Uncle John's coming," she said as they passed through the corridor. "I don't know what I'll do if he doesn't come."

All the furniture in the room had been cleared and everything except the piano had been moved to the right, opposite the stove. One of the larger armchairs stood on the balcony with a bottle beside it. The balcony door was ajar.

"So you don't want to listen to me," George said. As he looked around him, standing halfway between the table and the window, the light from both lamps fell on him. She suddenly pointed at his jacket.

"It's all mud!" she called out. She began to scratch at the front of the jacket with her nails. "How did that happen?"

"You can be very glad that I've still got it," he answered.

"But what happened?" she asked in a wailing tone, taking the material between her hands and rubbing it in an effort to remove the dirt. "There's a button missing!" she cried out. "Did you fall?"

"They tried to tear my uniform to pieces," he said slowly and calmly.

"Tear it?" she exclaimed. "Who?" The rubbing made her wrist hurt. She stopped, and breathed upon the swelling.

"The boys at the stop, if you want to know," he said. "They had sticks. You don't want me to fight, do you? So I didn't fight. Now you've got what you wanted. They tripped me up, too." He looked at the dried blood on his thumb.

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"Was that before you got to Aunt Hilly's?" she asked. "She should have tried to get it off, with warm water. That's the best way." She looked at his thumb and shook her head.

"No, after," he answered. She suddenly sniffed at his mouth.

"Who gave you a drink?" she called out. "Uncle Carl? They weren't drinking! You asked for one. You begged for it. Why're you always doing things like that?"

"They had the bottle on the table," he said wearily. "And they asked me if I wanted a drink. Could I say no? They had a drink themselves, too."

"Yes, Uncle Carl!" his mother said. "But not Hilly!" She shook her head with great certainty and a proud expression came over her face. "Not Hilly. She won't ever touch it! She always says why should I put stuff in my body that's poisonous? It's proved it's poison for the whole body." Suddenly she looked at him and her face stiffened. "Your cap!" she shouted. "Where's your cap?"

"Now will you please not make such a noise?" he said. "It's there, with them. I left it on the table. They won't eat it, will they?"

She sighed with relief. "They were nice to you, weren't they?" she asked, smiling. "What did Aunt Hilly say about the fish?"

"Yes, they were all right," he answered, going to the window.

"She liked them, did she?" his mother held on. "What did she say?"

"Yes, yes," he answered. "She had forgotten to buy fish herself."

"I knew she'd like them," Mana said. "Did she give you a letter for me?" He shook his head. "What did she say to you?"

"All kinds of things," he mumbled, standing with his back towards her. "We talked for a long time."

"So you talked for a long time," she repeated, nodding. "And Uncle Carl? Did you talk with him, too?" He gave no answer and tapped gently on the window frame. The sky had become so dark that the backyard looked as though it were nearly evening.

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"They'll do something," she said. She went to the window, too, and tried to look at the sky. A fine, almost imperceptible drizzle had begun to fall.

"It's going to rain," she said as though he had not seen it. She pulled the armchair inside and closed the balcony door. "I've got everything ready," she sighed. "But I can't do all the scrubbing myself. I tried, but I can't."

He went away from the window, and entered the alcove, where he switched on the lamp, and closed the curtain.

"Did Aunt Hilly tell you about that boy who didn't finish high school?" she asked. He did not answer. She stared about her in the room as she stepped towards the curtain. She was on the point of repeating her question when there was a long ring at the bell. George jumped out of the alcove.

"Who's that?" he asked with a hoarse voice, but his mother was already on her way to the door. George hurried to the corridor and put on his raincoat. Buttoning it up over his uniform, he ran back to the alcove and searched through his pockets for the streetcar tickets. When he found them he set fire to them with a match and threw them into the alabaster bowl of the lamp. Then he placed himself in back of the curtain so that he could look out from one of the corners. He listened, holding his breath. Heavy footsteps came up the small wooden staircase from the shop. "I have a ring," he mumbled. "I'll cut off their fingers." The footsteps entered the corridor.

"Just got here before it rained!" a man's voice said. "Did you see that sky?"

"I'm so glad you've come, John," he heard his mother answer, and he relaxed. The door was half open and he saw his uncle's pink round head with a black alpino beret on it peering into the room.

"I didn't know you were cleaning up," he said. "I won't hold you up very long." Mana opened the door completely and came in behind him.

"I'm not cleaning," she said quickly. "I'm going to scrub everything. I'm going to do it just as you told me. You said I should do it with ammonia."

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"I've just got here before it rained," he repeated. He lowered his head and, shaking raindrops from his alpino beret without taking it off, he went to the stove. "It's nice and warm here," he continued, warming his hands. "Never look at the calendar. If it's cold, it's cold, no matter what the date is. Don't ever listen to what they tell." He looked around for a seat. Mana quickly pushed an armchair from the other side of the room towards the stove.

"I've put everything ready to be scrubbed," she said.

"You can't do it inside the house, in here," he remarked. "You'll damage the floor. You can only do it outside."

"Yes, I know," Mana agreed. "I wanted to do it on the balcony." She went to the window and looked at the planks of the balcony which had already become wet.

"You can't do it in the rain," her brother said. "It's impossible to do it in the rain." He remained standing although the armchair was behind him, and went on warming his hands.

"I was waiting," she defended herself. "It isn't raining very hard. When it stops we can begin with the scrubbing." She came up to the stove and stood beside him, and held out her hands to the stove, too, although they were not cold. "If you'll help me..." she added.

"I haven't got time," he said. He took off his glasses and began to dry them with a part of his raincoat. "That's better, that's better," he continued, at last letting his heavy, stout body down into the armchair. "What would we do without our glasses? We're getting older and older every day." He spoke in a drawling, nasal intonation, his voice turning high at the end of each phrase. He unbuttoned his raincoat so that his greasy, threadbare suit of grey corduroy became visible. "Yes, it's cold already," he went on. "Not very cold, but cold enough."

"I put everything ready," Mana said. He did not answer, but began drumming on the arms of the chair with his long, dirty nails. Mana went to the mantelpiece.

"I think they're here," she mumbled, half to herself. She opened the wooden box, looked in it, and then closed it

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again. "Where did I put them?" she sighed. "Nothing's in its place any more."

"Oswald not in?" John asked.

"Oswald's gone fishing," she answered. "Yesterday."

"Gone fishing," he repeated. "Is that so? Well. So you're all on your own, are you?"

"George is in," she said quickly. She pointed at the alcove. "I think he's tired." She went to the curtain. "George?" she called. He gave no answer. She opened the curtain cautiously. He was standing by his bed in his underwear. "You aren't ill, are you?" she asked. "Do you still feel cold?"

"I'm going to the cinema," he answered, looking at his watch. "Do you want me to go out in this weather in my uniform? Is that what you want?"

"No," she said quickly. His uniform lay on the bed. "I'll try and get it clean for you. You've got to wear it tomorrow, haven't you?"

"I'm not going to wear it tomorrow," he answered. "I'm not going to wear it any more. Give me my brown suit." He pointed too the wardrobe and she quickly handed him his suit on a hanger.

"I'll see what can be done with warm water, Rabbit," she said, taking the uniform over her arm. "I'll get it off with warm water, I'm sure. I'll get it clean for you. You know you'll want to put it on tomorrow morning, don't you?"

"What's happening tomorrow morning?" John asked from the room.

"Tomorrow's his birthday," Mana said, coming back in the room and putting the uniform on the sideboard. She sat down on the piano stool.

"Is that so?" he said. "His birthday? One year older again! Getting older every year, that's how it goes! So tomorrow's his birthday. I see."

"He went to see Hilly this morning," she said lowering her voice and looking at the curtain which George had closed again. "They talked with him. She promised she'd..." The curtain opened and she became silent. George came into the room. He was dressed in his brown suit and raincoat.

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"Hello George," John said. George did not answer. He looked at his uniform on the sideboard and sauntered up to the window.

"You're right to put on your raincoat," Mana said. "I'm glad you put it on."

"You know what you must say if they come and ask for me, don't you?" he asked in a commanding tone.

"Somebody's coming for you?" she asked eagerly. "Somebody from school? Of course. I'll let them in and ask them to wait for you." She smiled. "If they don't mind waiting here. I'll give them a cup of coffee. I'll ask them to wait for you."

"You're not going to let anybody in," he said sharply, going to the door. "You tell them I'm not at home. You tell them I'm at sea."

"At sea?" she asked. "But—I won't say anything about that, Rabbit! I never talk about it, to nobody, never."

"Now will you tell them that I am at sea, or won't you?" he asked.

"At sea, yes. At sea," she answered. She cast a quick glance at John, but he sat with bent head, looking at the floor before the stove. George opened the door and disappeared into the corridor. They heard him pass through the shop.

"It isn't far," Mana said. There was a silence. "He's already been at Hilly's," she started again. "They had a long talk with him." She looked into the backyard. The rain fell harder.

"Talking," John said scornfully. "Words, words. People always talk a lot. You needn't tell me."

"It's so nice they talked with him," she said. "She'll do something for him. Carl can do a lot for him, too. He's a teacher!"

"Yes, they do a lot for somebody else!" he remarked, opening the lid of the stove and gazing into the fire. "I've seen that. How many rooms did they have painted this last year? Or papered? I don't remember that they ever asked for me. They'll ask some scab or other round the corner. I'm making too much money, see? That's what Hilly is like." There was a silence again, during which was only heard the soft rustling of the rain.

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"What do you think they'll do for you?" he asked, again opening the lid of the stove and studying the glowing coals as though he were looking for something that might be taken out. "Who came to see me when I was in hospital? Not Hilly."

"They live very far away,' Mana said.

"So you think they'll do something for you." He shut the stove. "What will they do for you, eh?"

"They know so many people!" she assured him. "She's told me that story about the boy at high school. It's such a wonderful story! And the way she told it! She's told it to George, too. I'm sure."

"What story?" John asked impatiently. "I know nothing about a story."

"Hilly knows a boy who was in high school," she began. "She knows his mother, too. He was bright enough, but he wouldn't work. He was in his fourth year, and then they expelled him. Because he wouldn't work hard! He didn't do any of his schoolwork!" She paused and watched her brother's face, but it seemed unmoved. "His mother told him that he had to go and find a job," she continued. "And do you know what kind of job he got? An errand boy! But after a year he wanted to go back to school, and then he couldn't."

"Why not?" John asked, without looking up.

"Because he was too old!" she explained. "He had already been in the same class twice!" He said he wanted to study all the things in school at home, out of books. But his mother said no I won't pay a penny for that, nothing, not for one book, it's all your own fault. You've only got yourself to blame she said. She wouldn't give him any money for books. And do you know what he did? He saved money from his wages, and he bought the books himself. He began to study in the evenings, at home. And the next year he passed the examination." She looked at her brother, and smiled. "She's told that story to George, too."

"Telling stories costs nothing," he muttered.

"They said George could come and see them, and that they would have a serious talk with him," she continued. "It's so

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nice of them. They're so busy. They have so much work to do. All the club work, and all the youth work. She's in the middle of youth work, Hilly is. There're lots of evenings when she doesn't get to bed till one, or even later."

"Yes, they like talking," he said. "They like to make people believe anything." He had become warm and he took off his beret to rub his flushed, almost entirely bald crown. "George's school wasn't a high school. It's a different kind of school."

"It's easier than a high school!" she exclaimed. "Carl's said it himself. It's easier!"

"Carl's said it himself," he repeated. "Carl knows everything. But this isn't a school where they learn out of books."

"Eh?" she brought out. For a moment a worried look came over her face. She went to one of the sideboard's drawers that still stood on the floor. "It' all in these books here," she said, taking up a handful of them and letting them fall back into the drawer. "They're all here. He hasn't got to buy any."

"It's a different kind of school, Mama," he repeated. "They don't sit down all day long. They do work with their hands as well. They work at engines, with tools. You can't do that at home."

"No," she said. She looked at the books and her lips began to tremble. Some of the books had fallen upon each other, half opened, and she squatted down to pick them up, but then she left them as they were lying. "I've done everything a mother could do!" she cried. "I went..." Her voice faltered and she began sobbing.

"There, there," John said, looking down at his hands. "Don't cry. You mustn't cry."

"I went to the school!" she brought out. "I saw the principal. I went to see him, in his room..." She stopped to overcome a fit of sobbing, and swallowed. "I went down on my knees!" she burst out.

"You mustn't cry," he said. "There're so many worse things in the world. There's so much misery in the world nowadays."

"I'll ask Carl if he will go to the school," she said, half whispering. She pulled herself together. Getting up, she began

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to open various boxes and drums about the room, and she searched through the sideboard although it was completely empty. Then she looked inside the wooden box on the mantelpiece again.

"Looking for something?" he asked.

"I put some cigarettes somewhere," she complained. "But I've forgotten where." She gave up her search and once more sat down on the piano stool.

"I've got to go at four," John said, looking at the clock. "Time doesn't stop. A clock ticks on and on, doesn't it?"

"I thought you would help me," she said. "I've got everything ready. I've only got to heat some water." She stood up. "I think it'll stop raining," she mumbled, looking out. "We must wait." The rainfall was so slight that it was only noticeable by the scattered drops which fell in some water which had collected on the balcony, and it was getting clearer. She went to the sideboard and carefully folded up George's uniform. "He put on his other suit," she said. "He didn't go out in the rain with this. He thought of it."

"They've told you God knows what," John said, "but what they haven't told you is that he shouldn't wear it. He can get in plenty of trouble if he goes on wearing it."

"Shouldn't wear it?" she asked. She sat down on the piano stool, holding the uniform on her lap.

"He isn't a ship's engineer, is he?" he said. "He can be fined just for wearing it. He shouldn't do that."

She shook her head, staring at her brother as she picked at the uniform.

"I don't know what I should do!" she sobbed, trying to wipe her cheeks with her sleeve. "Hilly knows someone who could teach him gardening. It would be so good for him if he'd work outside, in the open air. There're flowers, and plants, and trees. But he won't. And he doesn't want to work in the shop. Oswald said he ought to, but George wouldn't. He says he doesn't want to do any photography work."

There was a short silence, and she looked outside again, rubbing with her nail at the lapel of the uniform. "The rain's stopped," she said. "It's dry."

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"There's a thunderstorm coming," her brother said. "It's getting nearer."

"No, there isn't a thunderstorm,' she objected. "It was just a little rain. It's over. It's dry."

"I know what a thunderstorm is," he declared. "If I tell you there's a thunderstorm, you canbelieve it." He put on the alpino beret and went to the window. He looked up at the sky. Mana left the uniform on the piano and went to the window, too. It had become much brighter. The sky was not completely overcast any more, the clouds shifting on at great speed and changing shape so rapidly that now and then a piece of blue sky could be seen. The wind seemed fairly strong because even in the backyard it lifted a piece of wrapping paper and slowly moved it round over the ground.

"It isn't a thunderstorm," she decided. "It always gets very dark then."

"That has nothing to do with a thunderstorm," John answered.

A few small leaves, obviously carried along by the wind from a nearby park, whirled down into the yard. With them descended several thin, dustlike threads.

"Why can't they shake out their dust in the street?" she sighed. "Dirty pigs."

"Eh?" John asked.

"A dirty gang, all of them," she said bitterly, looking up and making a gesture with her hand towards the ceiling. "Look at all that dust coming down again! They don't even look to see if the windows or doors of other people are open." Another number of the same grey, thin little trails came down. John followed them with his eyes.

"It isn't dust, Mana," he said, peering at them. "It's that stuff that comes from the trees."

She had not listened. "I can't put anything outside," she complained. "I can't put any bowl or pan with pudding, or custard, or anything to cool off outside, or they'll throw their dirt down on it. When you say something, they laugh in your face. It's no fun to live here, I can tell you."

He shook his head, watching the last of the threads which

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made its way down. "It's cobwebs," he said. "It comes from the trees. The wind blows them loose, and they go up in the air. They're made by spiders. Or caterpillars. You always see them in the fall." He closed the buttons of his raincoat.

"When George comes back I must cook something for him," she whispered. "He must eat something." She took the uniform from the piano, put it back on the sideboard and sat down on the piano stool again. A book of music was about to fall from the standard and she readjusted it. John stood behind her, buttoning up the collar of his coat.

"What are you playing?" he asked.

"The Blue Danube," she answered, flattening the pages of the music.

"Yes, I like that!" he said. "When I'm working somewhere and it's on the radio, I always listen. You work so much better with a little tune! Why don't you play it, Mana!"

She bent forwards and held her fingers above the keys but then, suddenly, she turned away from the piano and began to sob.

"Now what's the matter," John grumbled.

"I can't play any more," she cried. "It's my wrist." She held up her arm. "It doesn't get any better. It's swollen all over."

"So you still let Oswald beat you," he said grimly. "It goes on just like before. I told you what you ought to do."

"It wasn't Oswald," she stammered, trying in vain to suppress her sobs. "Oswald didn't do it. I fell."

"And how did you come to fall, eh?" he asked sharply. "How did it happen?" She stared at him with her mouth open, shaking her head. The tears had reached her upper lip, but she did not wipe them off.

"I fell," she brought out with a high, childish voice.

"Because he made you stumble over his foot," he said. "To beat you on your head and back. That's what he does. You told me that yourself. He trips you up first."

"I..." she stammered, looking up at his face, but he stared outside. "What can I do?" she cried. She wiped her eyes with clumsy movements of her hand. "I wish I could go to Hilly,"

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she brought out, her words interrupted by sobs. "I've told everything to Hilly. She knows all about it."

"I told you I'd go with you to a lawyer," he said, still looking outside. "You don't have to let him beat you. He hasn't got the right. You've only got to tell the lawyer all the things he does to you."

"Hilly hasn't got enough room," she said, shaking her head. "They have only a living room, and a bedroom. And the little room upstairs is Carl's room." She counted the number on her fingers. "He has to do all his studying there, when he comes back from school. He must always study. They can't have two people."

"I'll go with you to see a lawyer," he said. "I told you what you should tell him. If only you tell him how long he's been doing this to you."

"Eight years!" she sobbed; "Eight years!"

There was a short silence again.

"I can't go without George," she began hoarsely, shaking her head. "I don't know what he'll do to George. There's no father to help him. He hasn't got a father! I can't leave George here."

"Sitting and crying won't help you," her brother said. "I can't go to see the lawyer for you. You must go yourself." He turned away from the window and stepped nearer. "You have only to show him the black and blue marks where he's hit you!" he said with emphasis. "That'll do. That's enough evidence."

"I can't do it," she moaned. "Where could I go? Where?" She began dabbing her swollen eyes and face with her handkerchief. Her sobs made her shoulders shake. She stared aimlessly into the room, at the furniture, and then looked outside, into the yard, as though a solution might come from there.

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BLUE FRUIT

Now the blue fruit
And frosty weeds decay;
Now, October's root
Weaves below the shade.

Old and golden pears
Hang still upon the stem;
Smell up the county air
And all my county kin;

Who stacked and pitched in fields
The stick, the golden grain,
Around the polished hills
Tore down the summer's rain.

Now the cold stones
Crack below the wall;
Send the crooked hare
A crooked mile or more;

Where every eye pegs
That rabbit toward his keep;
But, startled by a keg
Of apples in their sleep,

Weaves against the sun
Under the tilted ground,
Where great kilns burn
The hills without a sound.

—JOHN HAISLIP

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Fiction

MARJORIE ANAÏS HOUSEPIAN *(How Levon Dai Was Surrendered to the Edenuses)* has been published twice in *The Atlantic Monthly*. She is secretary to the President of Barnard College.

JACK KEROUAC *(The Mexican Girl)* is french-canadian by birth and a resident of Mexico. Harcourt Brace published his first novel, *The Town and the City*, in 1950 and an article on jazz appeared in *New World Writing 7*. *The Mexican Girl* is part of a novel on which he is presently at work.

GERARD-KORNELIS VAN HET REVE *(Gossamer)* is appearing for the second time in THE PARIS REVIEW, his *The Acrobat* having appeared in number five. A Dutchman, thirty-two years old, Mr. Van Het Reve won a prize in 1947 for his first novel *De Avonden*, and in 1951 the Dutch government awarded him a scholarship for his novella *Melancholia*. The scholarship was withdrawn the day after its announcement on the basis that his work was "a danger to public welfare". A committee of writers then showed their esteem for him by raising enough money to replace the scholarship. He has since written exclusively in English and recently has been working in London.

Interview

ALSTON ANDERSON was born in Panama in 1924, attended school in Kingston, Jamaica, and came to the United States in 1938. He has lived in Europe during the past five years. His poems have appeared in a number of German publications and a series of jazz critiques was published in France. Two of TERRY SOUTHERN's short stories have appeared in THE PARIS REVIEW. He was one of five authors recently chosen as outstanding young american writers by *Harper's Bazaar*.

Poetry

ROLF FJELDE *(On Their Roundness)* is a former editor of the

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Yale Poetry Review and *Poetry* (New York). His work has been published by the *Hudson Review* and *Western Review.*

JOHN HAISLIP *(Blue Fruit)* is a teaching follow at the University of Washington.

JOHN HOLLANDER *(The Fable of the Bears in Winter)* is a Junior Fellow in the Society of Fellows of Harvard University.

CHRISTOPHER LOGUE *(In Widdershin)* is a young English poet who lives in Paris and is the author of two books of verse: *Wand and Quadrant* and *The Weekdream Sonnets.*

W. S. MERWIN *(Sow)* is an American who is currently living in London. Two books of his verse have been published: *A Mask for Janus* and *The Dancing Bears*

LOUIS SIMPSON *(Orpheus in the Underworld)* teaches English at Columbia. A book of his verse entitled *Good News of Death* was recently published by Scribner.

Illustrations

ALBERT EISENLAU *(The Mexican Girl)* formerly studied at Pratt Institute and now lives and paints in Paris. He recently designed a production of Andre Obey's *The Rape of Lucrece* in Thornton Wilder's english translation.

JOHN HAYWARD (contents page) was born in Canada and educated in England. He has just returned from a sketching tour of Spain.

MICHEL JULAC (cover drawing) is a native of Dijon and has exhibited his work in Paris and London. He has illustrated Bertrand's *Gaspard de la Nuit* and is planning illustrations for Thackeray's *Book of Snobs.*

JAMES WINES *(Gossamer)* winner of the 1952 Pulitzer Scholarship in Art, is a young sculptor and artist who is working in Italy and France this year.

NOTE: The portfolio of Kokoschka drawings in this issue is published through the courtesy of Mr. Douglas Allen and the Wolfgang Gurlitt Gallery in Munich.

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SOUS LES TOITS DE PARIS

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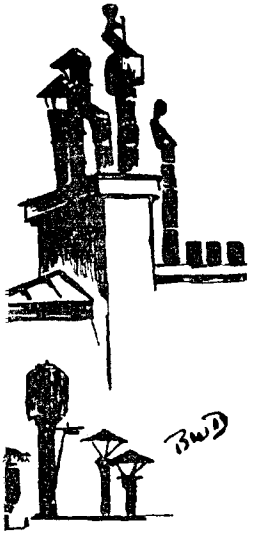

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Cafés and Cabarets

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Claude Labarre, Curiousity Bookshop, English Spoken. Old Books, Bibelots. 22 rue Dauphine, Pont-Neuf. Ode. 72–62.

English Bookshop, 42, rue de Seine. New and second-hand books in English. A wide selection of the latest periodicals.

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